A DAUGHTER OF THE GULAG—*THEODORE DRAPER*

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THE LAST INTEGRATIONIST

On the post-civil rights left, it has become fashionable to deride integration as a synonym for accommodation. [illegible] knows how radical a goal it really is.

Sean Wilentz

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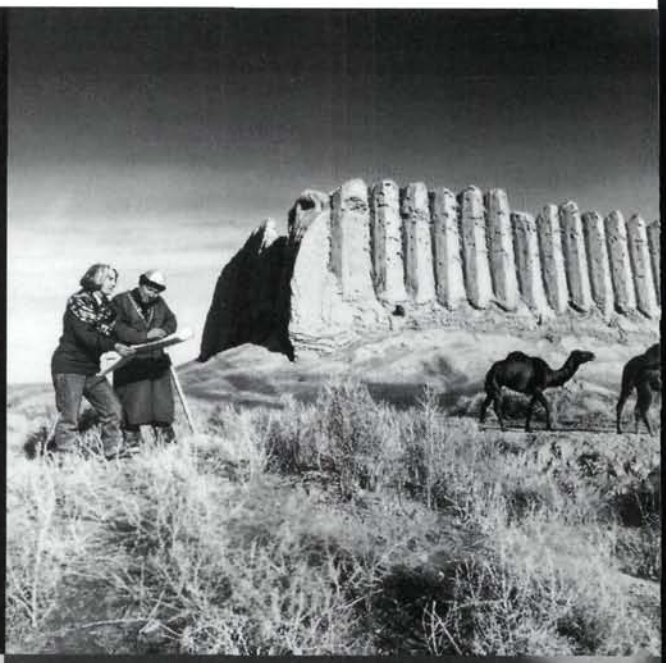
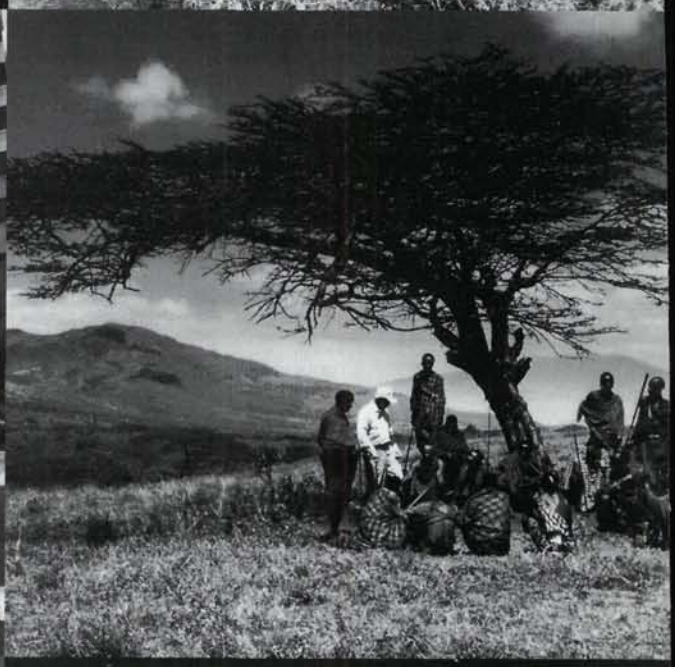
The spirit of enterprise leads from the Silk Road to the stars.





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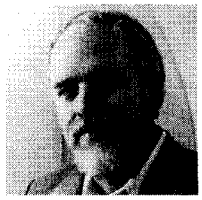
Five remarkable people with five extraordinary callings. Their work may be as diverse in nature as in location, yet each has been granted a Rolex Award for Enterprise. These 1996 Laureates have been singled out from thousands of applicants. They will receive $50,000 and an engraved Rolex Oyster Perpetual Chronometer in recognition of the originality, feasibility and potential of their endeavors, as well as for the sheer courage of their resolve. These enterprising individuals continue in the 20-year tradition set by previous Rolex Laureates who have made valuable contributions in their chosen fields.

At the Yale Medical School in New Haven, Ct., Dr. William Rosenblatt, an anesthesiologist, has devised a method of recovering medical supplies for developing countries. It is routine American procedure to lay out any surgical supplies which may become necessary during an operation. These are discarded afterward, used or not. Dr. Rosenblatt's system provides for the recovery of the unused items for distribution to needy hospitals worldwide. He places the potential recovery at $200 million in materials a year and will use his Award to promote his program, encouraging all major American hospitals to adopt it.

In the remotest villages of Senegal, Sanoussi Diakité is reviving the cultivation of a traditional cereal. "Fonio is such an easy crop to grow. It flourishes in poor soil, with little rainfall," he says. "But unfortunately, husking it is so laborious that these days few women bother to prepare it." Diakité, a mechanical engineer, has single-handedly invented a husking machine which prepares two kilos of grain in just six minutes, a task which takes an hour by hand. The Award will enable Diakité to build more machines for distribution around West Africa, and he hopes ultimately to restore the popularity of this nutritious foodstuff.

In the Kara Kum Desert where British archaeologist Dr. Georgina Herrmann now excavates, the Great Silk Road once passed. It was this which made the now-ruined site of Merv in Turkmenistan one of the greatest urban complexes of the medieval world. "Merv was a series of cities, built side by side," says Dr. Herrmann, "which makes it unique." Having put together one of the largest archaeological expeditions in Central Asia, she has already established that "watered," or "Damascus," steel was being produced here by a complex industrial process centuries earlier than previously thought. Dr. Herrmann will use her Award to fund further excavations and to record and preserve Merv's historic treasures.

Beneath an acacia tree in the mountains of East Africa, Masai elders ceded Dr. Royce Hall land to build an eye hospital. Now the Masai are helping him to build it, and some will receive paramedical training to help him run it, too. In Tanzania and Kenya half-a-million people are blind, often through cataracts, but Dr. Hall, an American ophthalmologist, says that once the hospital is open "we will be able to restore sight to 3,000 people a year." His Award will be put toward the construction of the hospital – costs which he has so far met without help from outside – and will also help ensure its future.



Refurbishing a historic telescope at the Mt. Wilson Observatory in Los Angeles, Gilbert Clark has given schoolchildren in four continents access to the stars. For while Mt. Wilson is in darkness, pupils on the other side of the world can pilot the telescope by remote control and observe stars in real time on their computer screens. "Two schools have followed the course of Pluto," Clark mentions, "and their observations are expected to help NASA better understand its orbit." He intends to use his Award to bring further telescopes into the program and hopes ultimately, through the Internet, to reach a wider audience still.

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JULY 1, 1996

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John Lewis at the March on Washington, 1963. Cover by Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 19.

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CORRESPONDENCE

My captain

To the editors:

Matthew Cooper's article on Bob Dole ("The Lieutenant," June 3) misunderstands the nature of leadership, the role of a Senate leader and Bob Dole himself. If Dole's career is a "soldier's story, not a captain's," how is it, as Cooper notes, that Daniel Patrick Moynihan credits Dole's "can-do spirit" with helping to save the Social Security system? A "can-do spirit" coupled with a capacity to work well with others, including members of the opposition party, is also a form of leadership, and one whose usefulness is not confined to a Senate leadership role.

Cooper criticizes Dole for not offering anything that was his during Clinton's first year in office. A Senate minority leader facing a Democratic president and a Congress that has adapted a fifty-one-vote strategy is not in a strong position to offer his own legislative agenda. Leadership in these circumstances consists of maintaining an opposition's morale and purpose. However one views the defeat of the Clinton stimulus program and health care proposals, and the slowing or revising of other initiatives, this is clearly a reflection of leadership within an opposition role.

STANLEY RENSHON
New York, New York

Re: district

To the editors:

It may not take a brain surgeon to diagnose the District of Columbia's troubles ("Washout," June 3), but it plainly takes someone other than the editors of TNR. Despite your simplistic description, our difficulties clearly do not stem solely from an incompetent city government and a large population of poor people, and, as locals, you should know better.

In its desperation to wrest some measure of self-government from Congress, D.C. accepted responsibility for a huge unfunded pension liability from the federal government in return for limited "home rule" in the 1970s. Felix Rohatyn and your entire editorial staff could not have prevented this enormous, expanding liability from swallowing the District's revenues whole. Further, unlike other desperately poor cities, we are uniquely unable to raise funds by taxing commuters or by obtaining state funds, encouraging further flight of our middle-class residents to the Virginia and Maryland suburbs and leaving our coffers bare. Finally, a vast amount of our productive real estate produces no revenue for the District—not just the various parts of the federal government, but the huge number of non-profit organizations and schools it attracts.

Eleanor Holmes Norton's tax proposal is thus an appropriately unique approach to a unique situation. Unlike Newark, Detroit or South Central L.A., we are truly subject to taxation without representation, not merely a quaint constitutional anomaly but a daily reality that prevents D.C. from saving itself. Because my neighbors and I believe in the need for strong urban cores and back up that belief by living here, we are unable to have any say in our own governance, unable to raise revenues in the usual ways, and are responsible for vast debts for which the District obtains no benefit. I cheer the tax plan and pray fervently for its passage—of course, that's about all I can do, because I have no voice in the Congress of the United States.

LESLIE K. MILES
Washington, D.C.

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Foreign morals

To the editors:

Thanks to Peter Beinart ("Out of Character," June 3) for his discussion of my thoughts on American foreign policy, which he finds "particularly wild." Actually, as he concedes in the next sentence, it's "a noble moral impulse applied consistently," quite in keeping with our traditions and national character. Beinart thinks that it's possible to sever our commitment to democracy from "national interest," but this is an illusion, because the American people will turn against any embrace of hateful tyrants. Ask the Shah, or Papa Doc, or Ferdinand Marcos. It is only a matter of time before we are forced to abandon close ties with nasty regimes in China or Saudi Arabia, and whoever happens to be president at that moment will pay a substantial political price at home as well. Isn't it better to use our influence and our power to push such regimes in the direction of democracy or, if that fails, to help local democrats? Beinart prefers that we act like the French: shut up about Chinese repression, torture and slave labor so that we can sell them some airplanes. Count me out. Americans will not and should not tolerate a foreign policy that strengthens tyrants. It is madness to provide the Chinese—and through them, Libya, Iran, Iraq and North Korea—with advanced technology that will be used to design and manufacture weapons of mass destruction. There has to be linkage. If that's particularly wild, heaven save us from the moderates.

Beinart takes me to task for daring to say that the rest of the world recognizes the superiority of American civilization, but the past twenty years have seen a global democratic revolution, inspired by our values: that citizenship, not race, religion or ethnicity, is the proper basis for civil society, and that the people must be free to determine their own destinies. George Bush and Bill Clinton betrayed the democratic revolution, which is one reason we see a resurgence of tyranny. If the tyrants prevail, they will come after us, because we threaten their legitimacy. Beinart is wrong to believe that we can avoid such conflicts if only we refrain from annoying the tyrants; it is what we are, even more than what we say and do, that threatens them.

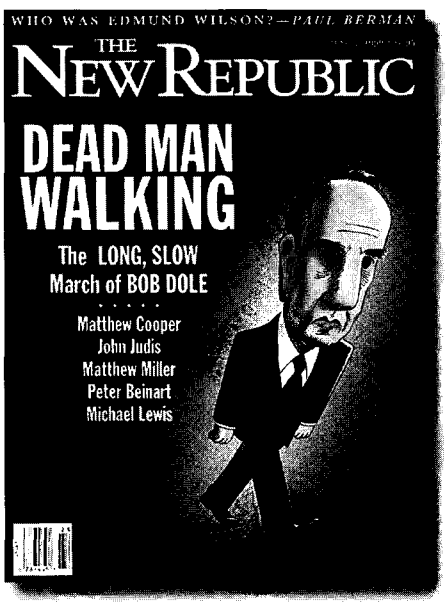
Clinton's China policy is actually a caricature of the old Republican stereotype: what's good for business is good for America. He gets in a dither over Chinese pirating of CDs and video games, but brags about selling them militarily useful technology. He goes all-out for democracy in Haiti (bravo!), but makes craven deals with Cuba. He finally did a little something in Bosnia after deferring to the cowardly Europeans. We need a lot better, or we risk the righteous indignation of brave democrats all over the world who will denounce our betrayal of our own principles. And they will be right.

MICHAEL A. LEDEEN
Washington, D.C.

Disagree to disagree

To the editors:

I have grinned and borne your continual cheap-shotting of Bill Clinton for his failure to perfectly toe the line on your orthodoxy *du jour*. But the June 3 Notebook item "Disagree to Agree" repre-



sents a new low in your attempt to force facts into a cynical mold.

The fact that Bob Dole erroneously attacks the president by misrepresenting his achievements in no way demonstrates that the president is "famously all over the place." The Dole statements demonstrate only that the former senator from Kansas is either dangerously uninformed or a cynical faker. Now that's a real news story. Why not cover that?

DAVID A. SONENSHEIN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Overdue

To the editors:

From our Science, Industry and Business Library offices at 500 Fifth Avenue, corner of 42nd, let me give David Berreby ("Cold Storage, June 3) these perspectives:

SIBL sure is different from its parents. As a frequent visitor to the research library on 42nd Street as well as the mid-Manhattan branch, I must tell you it is great to have the business collection all in one spot. It seemed inevitable that no matter which of the other two libraries you were in, what you were looking for was at the other.

Which leads to how one coped with this. The only sane solution was to telnet from one's office over the Internet to NYPL Net catalog to determine which library to go to. This is exactly what one does at the new computer terminals at SIBL, except now one walks upstairs or downstairs instead of back and forth across Fifth Avenue. The terminals in fact are vastly better than those they replaced.

The computerized databases, one should note, are pure gain. There was nothing remotely like this facility at either 42nd Street or mid-Manhattan. The CD-ROMs at 42nd Street were few in number and seemingly always broken.

As I was at SIBL today, I encountered a "wandering" staff who instantly cut short my wait on line for the help desk.

Your writer missed a terribly important part of SIBL's mission, which is to establish a research facility for small businesses in New York City. What a fabulous addition this is to the region's economic base!

On my walk back to the office, I stopped at the mid-Manhattan branch. It is just as funky as Berreby writes. They were most efficient in renewing my loan of Richard McBrien's *Catholicism*, and the branch is fabulous. It fulfills a great need for the city.

I exult at the addition of SIBL and glory at the "people's" branch. Berreby should go have another look at SIBL. It takes a couple of trips but is a fabulous addition to an already wonderful library system.

JOHN P. VEREL
Rowayton, Connecticut

Marble arch deluxe

To the editors:

While I share your suspicion about the British strategy in feeding European leaders British beef (Notebook, June 3), it should be pointed out that the European Union consists of fifteen (and not twelve or thirteen as you seem to think) member states. So, that's two down, twelve leaders to go. (I am not sure if the British are also trying to kill their own prime minister, John Major—given his low popularity we should not discount that possibility.)

ERIC SCHLIESSER
Chicago, Illinois

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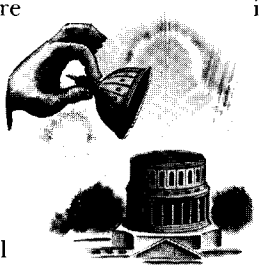
FROM WASHINGTON

Unchristian

At the June 1 Virginia Republican convention, somebody handed Ralph Reed, the executive director of the Christian Coalition, a sticker for James Miller. Miller, a socially conservative economist, was challenging the moderate Senator John Warner for the Republican nomination. According to *The Richmond Times Dispatch*, Reed slapped the sticker on his lapel and wore it conspicuously for TV interviews.

The next weekend, on the eve of the election, the Coalition distributed 750,000 voter guides, primarily through local churches. While the Coalition had given Warner a "100 percent" rating in the "1996 Election Year Edition" of its "Congressional Scorecard," it tilted the voting guide in Miller's direction. It chose to highlight ten issues on which Miller agreed with its position each time, while Warner had backed it on only two. The coalition omitted, for instance, Warner's opposition to lifting the ban on gays in the military and his support for banning immigrants infected with the AIDS virus—two issues that earlier scorecards had featured.

So the Christian Coalition actively supported Miller over Warner, right? Not according to Reed, who insisted at the convention that, "[W]e are not issuing any kind of endorsement, not telling people who to vote for or how to vote." How can he get away with this? Simple: by exploiting a loophole in the tax and election guidelines. This loophole has been created by several recent, eccentric decisions from the U.S. District Court of Maine. According to these decisions, if an organization does not literally state "vote for x," it can escape the laws governing campaign contributions. And that's exactly what the Christian Coalition wants to do.



Since the 1971 passage of the Federal Election Campaign Act (and its amendment in 1974), the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and the IRS have drawn a distinction between "social welfare organizations" such as Common Cause or the Consumer Federation of America, which lobby but do not endorse candidates, and "political committees," which do. Social welfare organizations aren't required to disclose or limit their contributions—any individual or business can contribute as much as they want—but they can't be "organized and operated primarily for the purpose of directly or indirectly ... influencing or attempting to influence the selection, nomination, election, or appointment" of candidates. That would make them a political committee. And political committees are subject to certain strictures: they can't accept money directly from businesses or take more than $5,000 a year from individuals, and they must disclose their contributors to the FEC.

Congress had good reason to make this distinction. By protecting issue-based organizations from surveillance, Congress safeguarded the rights of a company lobbying against a bill that could drive it out of business or a civil rights group working to end racial discrimination. By regulating election practices, on the other hand, Congress sought to discourage corruption in elections and to prevent the wealthy and powerful from determining the outcome of campaigns simply by outspending their opponents. When businesses could set up secret slush funds for candidates, they were limiting the political power, and by extension the free speech, of ordinary citizens. During the last two decades, however, groups on both the left and the right—from labor unions to term limits organizations—have sought to evade this important distinction.

The Christian Coalition has been a particularly gross offender. Unlike many single-issue lobbies, the Christian Coalition is deeply partisan. While it has cast a friendly eye toward a few House Democrats, it has taken an active role within the Republican Party. In several states, including Iowa and Texas, it dominates the party's political organization. In Virginia, for instance, the Coalition has intervened in intra-party disputes that don't bear directly on issues, but on party leadership. In 1994, Coalition leaders backed Oliver North over Miller for the GOP Senate nomination even though the two candidates' positions on social issues were indistinguishable. This year, the Coalition appeared to support Miller mainly be-

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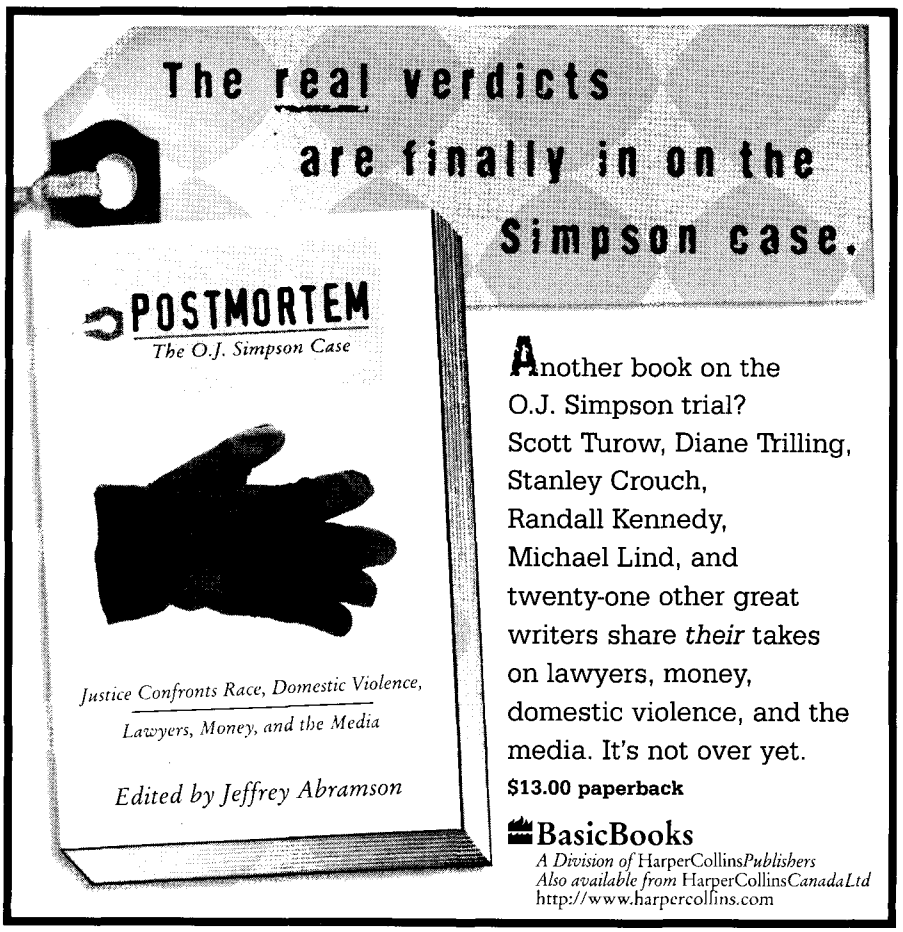
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 1, 1996

UNDUE CREDIT

Of all Newt Gingrich's wacky ideas—rocketing the handicapped into outer space, bringing back orphanages—the most widely ridiculed was a tax credit for the poor to buy laptop computers. "It was a dumb idea," admitted Gingrich soon after suggesting it last winter. And he was right. After all, it would cost billions; a "tax credit" for people too poor to pay taxes is just a spending program; and given the choice, the poor would probably do without Windows 5.0 and spend the money on, say, food.

Usually, it's successful ideas, rather than those derided even by their originators, that go on to be emulated. But, strangely, what was Leno fodder when applied to laptops is now the cutting-edge solution for fixing everything from welfare to health care. Both parties seem sure that tax subsidies represent the best response to nearly every question of social policy—and, in a campaign season, they're eager to outbid each other in the tax credit bonanza. To wit:

Families: The Republican budget still calls for a $500 per child tax credit. So does President Clinton.

Adoption: Congress passed, and Clinton signed, a $5,000 credit for families that adopt children.

Charity: Bob Dole has endorsed, and Clinton has praised, a universal $500 tax credit for charitable contributions. (See "Sweet Charity," by Matthew Miller, page 18.)

Education: Clinton recently announced a $1,500 tax credit for college tuition.

Health care: Congressional Republicans stand prepared to sink the popular Kennedy-Kassebaum reform unless it includes tax-preferred status for medical savings accounts.

Politicians used to win votes on the stump by promising to spend money. Today "spending" is old Democrat, big government, the 1970s. Tax credits, on the other hand, are New Democrat, small government—in short, 1996. What's the difference? None, really. Take the tuition tax credit. Suppose that instead of letting students pay $1,500 less in taxes, the government sent the $1,500 directly to colleges. The effect would be exactly the same, except that running the program through the Department of Education instead of the IRS would transform it from a "tax cut" into a "spending increase."

Tax crediteers argue that their plans are more rational and market-oriented than direct government spending. Letting individuals decide how to spend their money instead of leaving the job to bureaucrats sounds sensible. But in fact government by tax credit makes bureaucracy *less* efficient by folding all manner of administrative tasks into the already-complex tax code. Dole's charity credit, for instance, shifts administrative responsibility for the nation's welfare system from the Department of Health and Human Services to the IRS. Does he want to run on the promise of 100,000 new IRS agents on the street?

Even if the IRS *were* equipped to take over the federal bureaucracy, tax credits aren't very efficient at changing people's behavior: they often end up paying people to do what they would have done anyway. Most recipients of the Earned Income Tax Credit, a subsidy for the working poor, would work even without it. What makes the EITC worthwhile is that, unlike the middle-class tax credits Clinton and Dole are offering, it redistributes money to people who really need it. While tax credits can provide incentives, their main effect is to give people money.

That, of course, is why they're so popular. Tax cuts retain the veneer of respectability that pork barrel spending has long since lost. The family tax credit is the most blatant; in its original manifestation, the GOP budget called for partial refund checks to be mailed out at a very particular time: October 1996. Boss Tweed would blush.

Republicans maintain that tax cuts aren't pork because they allow people to keep their own money. This is the basis for their criticism of Clinton's tuition credit: his break is refundable, so it can be enjoyed by students who don't owe taxes at all. Republican tax breaks aren't (and hence are worth less lower down the income scale). But that's hardly a principled distinction. Allowing only certain people to keep more of their money is really no different than giving certain people money. It's just that the certain people who qualify for the GOP's tax credits earn more than the certain people who qualify for Clinton's.

All tax credit schemes should be put to the same test: Would they make sense as a direct spending program? Some causes (education, adoption) are worth spending money on. Others are bribes: the family tax credit for middle-class swing voters, medical savings accounts that benefit a big GOP donor. If today's anti-government crowd really wants to follow in the Tammany Hall tradition of their hated big-government predecessors, they should at least be honest enough to admit it. •

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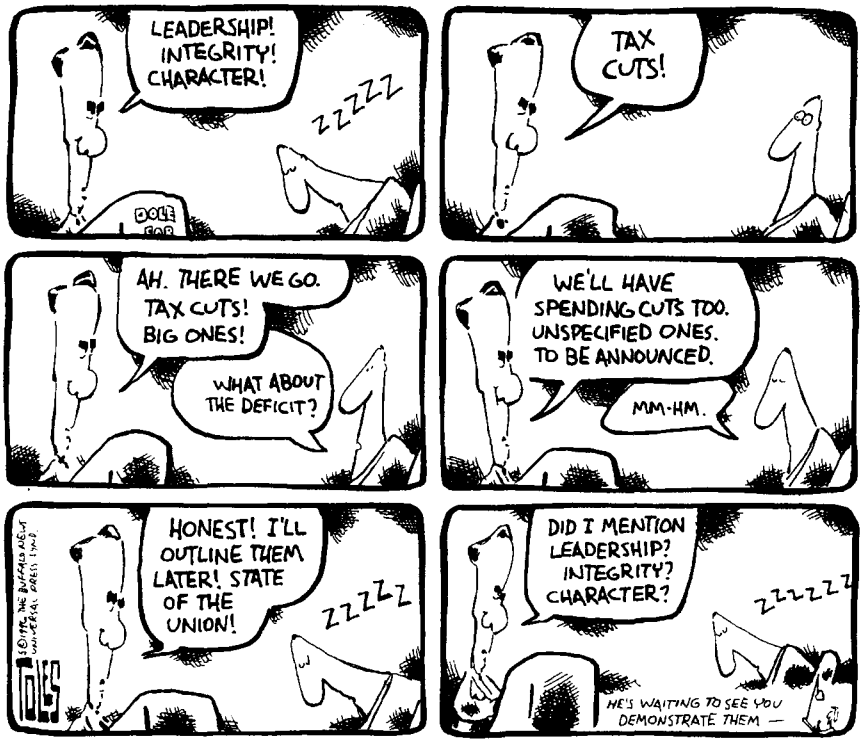
NOTEBOOK

PRIMARY MADNESS: With the 1996 election season heating up, we'd like to showcase a few of the aspiring public servants who hope to represent their fellow citizens this primary season. We will begin with the more conservative districts. In Idaho, anesthesiologist William Levinger challenged Helen Chenoweth, known locally as militia mama, in last month's Republican primary. During an interview at a Boise television station in April, Levinger began taking off his clothes, then offered a reporter $5,000 for a kiss. Soon after this incident, he checked into a mental health unit. Soon after that he won 32 percent of the vote (and lost the primary). In Maine, meanwhile, state Senator John Hathaway, a Republican, ran a family friendly campaign to capture an open Senate seat. Last week, it was discovered that Alabama authorities investigated Hathaway, though never charged him, for sleeping with his 12-year-old babysitter in 1990. He also won about a third of the vote, but lost the primary. But this year's campaign follies are not confined to the Republicans. In Montana, Bill Yellowtail, a former state senator and EPA administrator, ran in the Democratic congressional primary. In the last three weeks of the race, Yellowtail admitted: (1.) he'd had his Senate wages docked for failing to pay child support, (2.) he'd slapped his wife so hard he sent her to the hospital, and (3.) as a student at Dartmouth, he tried to break into the same camera store twice and was expelled. Yellowtail won the race. Guess we'll have to look elsewhere for our civic virtue.


LEADERSHIP! INTEGRITY! CHARACTER!
ZZZZZ
DOLE '96
TAX CUTS!
AH. THERE WE GO. TAX CUTS! BIG ONES!
WHAT ABOUT THE DEFICIT?
WE'LL HAVE SPENDING CUTS TOO. UNSPECIFIED ONES. TO BE ANNOUNCED.
MM-HM.
HONEST! I'LL OUTLINE THEM LATER! STATE OF THE UNION!
ZZZZZ
DID I MENTION LEADERSHIP? INTEGRITY? CHARACTER?
ZZZZZZ
HE'S WAITING TO SEE YOU DEMONSTRATE THEM —

SENIOR SLUMP: Think only Democrats can demagogue on entitlements? Republican governor, Senate aspirant and supposed fiscal realist William Weld of Massachusetts attacked incumbent Democrat John Kerry recently for having the temerity to suggest that preserving Social Security may require means-testing its recipients and raising the retirement age to 70. For most of the wonks who've looked hard at Social Security's future, these proposals are no-brainers. But Weld snuggled his head firmly into the sand in a press conference last week, opining that "we need to protect Social Security, not cut benefits for millions of Americans," and that "if government owes anything to anybody, it owes senior citizens." Asked if the program is in any kind of financial trouble, Weld answered with a logic-defying "no." Maybe Weld, long seen as potential veep material, is auditioning for a spot on a Dole ticket, where he might well be called upon to defend as fiscally responsible an across-the-board tax cut. So far, so good.

PETA PEEVE: ACT UP may have its problems, but the AIDS activism group has certainly learned, from the hardest of lessons, that scientific research matters. Last week, it struck a blow for reason on the left when it boycotted the Gay Freedom Festival in Washington, protesting the inclusion of fund-raising events for the organization PETA, or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. PETA opposes all animal experiments, even for medical research on diseases such as AIDS. The organization claims that cell research and computer modeling produce the same results. But these methods cannot replace drug trials and other experiments conducted on complex living organisms. As Joseph E. Murray, a 1990 Nobel Laureate in medicine, explained in a recent *Los Angeles Times* op-ed, "AIDS research would be impossible without animal experimentation." Indeed, without animal research, we would probably not have chemotherapy, organ transplants or a cure for polio. Meanwhile, the prospect of a confrontation with ACT UP doesn't seem to have brought out the best in PETA. Asked about people with AIDS, hoping for a vaccine, PETA's Dan Mathews told the *Times*: "'Don't get diseases in the first place, schmo,' is what I tell those contemplating unsafe sex."

ANOTHER SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH:

Infertility unlikely to be passed on

—*Montgomery Advertiser*, May 11

(Thanks to Joel N. Sanders of Montgomery, Alabama.)

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THE HALL MONITOR

By Stephen Glass

When it comes to political reform, Congressman Pete Hoekstra is a zealot. A successful entrepreneur, he swears he'll return to the furniture business after a self-imposed twelve-year term limit. In the first of his shoestring campaigns, his house doubled as his campaign headquarters, and he biked between events. He has never accepted PAC money.

And he proselytizes. Last year, the Michigan Republican forced the House to permit C-SPAN's cameras to pan the chambers. For seventeen years, the network had not been allowed to move its cameras from a tight focus on whoever was speaking, which meant members could preach to an empty chamber without looking silly. The change didn't exactly endear Hoekstra to his colleagues. House Speaker Newt Gingrich said members were worried that they might get caught sitting in the audience "tugging their ears" or "picking their noses." Thirty Republicans wrote Gingrich a letter demanding a return to the old rules. But Newt refused.

Now Hoekstra is at it again, and House Republicans are newly enraged. In recent weeks, Hoekstra's Congressional Reform Task Force has been putting the finishing touches on a proposal that some House leaders fear would cripple incumbent advantage, just as the GOP is trying to capitalize on it to retain control of the House. While the plan is still secret, staff members who have seen drafts say it calls for the elimination of political action committees, fines for missed votes and pension cuts so drastic they would constitute de facto term limits.

From the start, the task force's ideas have been unwelcome. In January, when Hoekstra surveyed House Republicans on the issue of congressional reform, 33 percent said it should be the GOP's *lowest* priority. One unidentified congressman wrote on the questionnaire, "Maybe you'll be happy if we strip ourselves naked, genuflect on the House floor, and sell our children into slavery."

But, while Hoekstra has met a chilly reception from many lawmakers, he's pushed ahead with the backing of Gingrich, who reportedly thinks congressional reform will help the GOP in November and likes it because many House rules can be altered without Senate or presidential approval. Gingrich has planned a "Reform Week" in July for votes on task force recommendations.

Two weeks ago, Gingrich and Majority Leader Dick Armey said they would sponsor the ban on donations from PACs. Their pledge unleashed an internecine revolt. At a GOP Policy Committee meeting earlier this month, dozens of members—including Majority Whip Tom DeLay, nicknamed "The Hammer" for his aggressive PAC fund-raising tactics—attacked the proposal. Voting for a PAC ban in an election year, just when lawmakers are going hat in hand to lobbyists, they argued, would be suicidal. Besides, PAC money now benefits the GOP disproportionately. In 1995—an off-election year—PACs gave Republicans $42 million and Democrats $25.6 million. "I don't think you solve the issue by calling yourself Captain Ahab and dubbing PACs your Moby Dick," Kansas Republican Pat Roberts told *The Hill* after the meeting.

While most of the squabbling so far has been over the PAC ban, some of the task force's proposals are likely to cause intra-party firestorms in coming weeks. A recent draft calls for a Congressional Attendance Reform Act, which would require members to return their pay for each day they miss a vote. To verify emergency medical or family exemptions, representatives would have to provide notes from family members or doctors. "This is like being in elementary school," says one Republican's chief of staff. "Hoekstra is like a super-hall-monitor."

Hoekstra, who maintains one of the best attendance records in Congress, has long been obsessed with absenteeism. In 1994, he filed a complaint with the Ethics Committee against Texas Democrat Craig Washington, who had logged an absentee rate of about 80 percent, and two other offenders. Washington was voted out of office in 1994; the other two retired.

It is precisely that precedent that worries Hoekstra's fellow Republicans. Highlighting absences can only hurt incumbents come November. "We should have pushed this when we were in the minority," the chief of staff added. "Incumbents are the only ones with bad attendance records. Challengers have perfect attendance."

But here, too, political cover comes from Gingrich, who hopes to use the attendance act to usher in a certain pet reform of his own—a bill that fines congressmen who file baseless ethics complaints. This spin-off of "loser pays" tort reform would allow a bipartisan committee to fine individual members who file "frivolous" complaints and charge their offices for the costs. Gingrich, who was charged with sixty-five tax violations (sixty-four were rejected by the Ethics Committee), has repeatedly said the ethics process is being abused for partisan purposes. If lawmakers squawk at a new rule that fines them, the attendance reform bill will deflect attention away from the controversial ethics reform.

Finally, the task force may suggest denying members pension increases after their twelfth year, hoping that this will serve as a kind of term limit—encouraging them to leave government sooner. Minnesota Republican Gil Gutknecht has already sponsored such a bill. Senior members, not surprisingly, are grumbling. And

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GOP bigwigs fear any pension debate will open up a matter they'd rather keep tightly shut: Bob Dole's generous retirement package. The Kansas senator will receive $126,000 a year for his thirty-five years of service. One Gutknecht staffer says GOP party officials are pressuring House leadership to downplay his boss's bill during Reform Week, or to ignore it altogether.

"Cuts in pensions are widely popular with the American public and—wonder, wonder—hated in Congress. They generally die an untimely death," says Garry Ruskin of Ralph Nader's Congressional Accountability Project. Indeed, despite promises made every election season, Congress has not considered any pension changes since 1983.

While some reforms will never go over big with lawmakers, Hoekstra might still wonder why he's not so popular in the lunchroom these days. During the 1994 campaign, House GOP leaders heralded a new era of citizen-legislators, accountable as never before to the folks back home. Back then, they saluted Hoekstra for running against the Beltway elite. But, while Hoekstra's message of austere congressional reform hasn't changed, the targets of his reform efforts have. Being in power, of course, makes all the difference. •

YANGTZE POSTCARD

RIVER PHOENIX

By Tom Post and George Wehrfritz

Through the late-morning gloom of fog and diesel fumes, thousands of workers chip away at the walls of a vast open pit. Caterpillar earthmovers scoop up the gravelized concrete and haul their loads to a huge foundation. There, Komatsu steam rollers glide back and forth, piling one layer on top of another. China is engaged in a colossal enterprise—a dam to harness the prodigious power of the Yangtze River. It is the country's largest construction project since the Great Wall. When completed, the mass of concrete and steel will be nearly a mile and a half across and 600 feet high, holding back a reservoir 396 miles long. China's past and future converge in this vast undertaking: the dam will control downriver flooding that has plagued China for millennia; the world's biggest hydro power plant will help fuel the nation's economic boom into the next century.

That sense of destiny seems lost on the 6,000 workers at the site. No one looks up at the slogans spelled out in giant red characters—"FIRST RATE CONSTRUCTION, FIRST-RATE QUALITY," "A FIRST-RATE SPIRITUAL CIVILIZATION" and "CARRY FORWARD THE PIONEERING SPIRIT, BUILD A GRAND THREE GORGES PROJECT." Their lives begin and end each day in the flimsy tin and plastic shacks that line one side of the pit, where they earn up to $48 a month. But local bureaucrats appreciate the burden of history. Says an official in Wanxian, a river city of 300,000 that will disappear under the rising Yangtze during construction, "The Three Gorges dam is a transmillennial project that China's impoverished masses have dreamed of for decades."

It could just as easily become a national nightmare—an example of reckless central planning that will proceed even at the cost of busting the state budget, destroying a fragile ecosystem and derailing the lives of more than a million people who will be forcibly relocated. Originally scheduled to be built within a decade, the project will now take at least seventeen years to complete, say government officials. In the last ten years, the estimated costs have swelled nearly eightfold to $30 billion or more—a sum that threatens to choke off other critical state programs and China's phenomenal economic growth. Construction will cause major environmental damage, some of it irreversible. Chongqing, a vital shipping city of 13 million people, will be awash in silt and sludge when the dam slows the rushing Yangtze into a nearly static lake. Various species of rare wildlife will simply disappear. So, too, will some extraordinarily beautiful scenery, as the rising river turns the sheer limestone cliffs of the Three Gorges into knoll-sized islands. Citing serious environmental concerns, the U.S. Export-Import Bank recently rejected a request from American companies to provide financial guarantees for the project.

But the greatest cost of all may be human. Flooding will destroy millions of acres of fertile cropland, the major source of income for 600,000 farmers, submerge dozens of cities and villages and displace as many as 1.5 million people in the Yangtze River valley—all to provide electricity to Shanghai, 700 miles away. The burden of providing new homes and livelihoods for those displaced people will fall hardest on poor and overcrowded Sichuan and Hubei provinces. Chinese officials acknowledge this toll, though sometimes elliptically. "I once visited the [Hoover Dam]," says Wang Rongxuan, mayor of Chengdu, Sichuan's provincial capital. "It has a memorial to workers killed during construction. The few who died gave their lives so that many people would have water and electricity. Now Sichuan is in the same situation. We're making a sacrifice."

It is a sacrifice that has never troubled China's leaders. For decades, they have exploited the idea of the dam as an emblem of the country's greatness. Dr. Sun Yat-sen first suggested the project seventy-five years ago as part of a program to industrialize China. Mao Zedong reached the drafting stage several times, but the plan got buried in the chaos of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Now Prime Minister Li Peng, still a possible successor to

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Financing Elections... As If Democracy Mattered

Remember when democracy was something you believed in, not something for sale?

Those days have come . . . and gone.

Big money from big campaign contributors has put a price tag on our democracy. Our fundamental principles – like a government accountable to the people – are undermined as candidates collect millions of campaign dollars from rich people and organizations with specific and special interests. When the election's over, the donors collect. Fancy dinners. Private briefings. Special favors. Subsidies. Tax breaks.

No wonder average Americans are angry. Democracy is supposed to be about empowering all the people, not just the people with money. Political equality and government accountability are the values that inspire our faith in democracy. America's history is the history of our progress toward making these goals real for every citizen. These same values should inspire efforts to reform campaign financing.

Americans want real reform – not empty promises. But not all the proposed reforms in Congress and in state legislatures across the country will solve the problem.

How will we recognize real campaign finance reform?

The Center for Responsive Politics presents four essential "guideposts" for reform. Keep these in mind when you hear lawmakers talk about campaign finance reform. Real campaign finance reform will:

ENHANCE COMPETITION

– Allow qualified Americans of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to seek public office regardless of their personal wealth or their access to wealth.

RESTORE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

– Eliminate the inevitable conflicts of interest created when big money buys elections and the special interest replaces the public interest.

ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS

– Provide all Americans access to their government and their elected representatives regardless of their ability to make campaign contributions.

STOP THE MONEY CHASE

– Place the people's business first by freeing elected public servants from the money chase that distracts them from the responsibilities of governing.

Campaign finance reform . . . as if democracy mattered. Because it does.

The Center for Responsive Politics is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization in Washington, DC that studies the role of money in politics. For a reprint of this essay and our handbook, call 1-800-653-2129.

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the ailing Deng Xiaoping, has tied his political fortunes to the success of the dam. He rammed approval through the National People's Congress—where one-third of the normally pliant legislature either voted against the dam or abstained. Li has called the project a centerpiece of China's development and invited international businesses to take part.

But, so far, foreign investors have run for high ground. The World Bank hasn't been asked to participate, largely because its presence would attract international attention and criticism. But Beijing would like to raise a large portion of the project's costs by issuing stocks and bonds abroad. While the government has approached both Merrill Lynch and Morgan Stanley, no public offering seems likely for some time. "Two billion dollars is a lot of money, more than one bite of the apple," says the managing director of project finance at a major U.S. investment bank. To attract high rollers, China, he adds, would have to offer very high interest rates—and a guaranteed revenue source. But the dam's first power plant, a potentially promising money generator, isn't scheduled to come onstream until 2003 at the earliest.

Moreover, according to Dai Qing, a Chinese journalist and expert on the Three Gorges dam, state planners have calculated their estimates without regard to inflation, now running at 10.5 percent, or interest payments to the National Development Bank, which is picking up 40 percent of the tab. Dai also claims the budget leaves out such unavoidable expenses as dredging and excavating the Yangtze, as well as cleaning up effluents, moving cultural relics and archaeological remains (typically 4 or 5 percent of the total costs in large construction projects) and supporting transportation companies that may go bankrupt if river navigation halts for months at a time. Then there's the problem of paying a large workforce. "In the past, labor has been provided by the military or prisoners—both free," Dai says. "Now, they'll have to bear the costs."

Beijing views the dam as a grand experiment in social engineering and a major effort to alleviate poverty. To the government's way of thinking, the million-plus people who will be uprooted—officials call them "immigrants"—have a chance to make a new and better start, helped along by investments in new factories and jobs, as well as new housing, electricity, running water and, eventually, decent roads.

But many of these potential "immigrants" complain about having to give up fertile acreage for ground less hospitable to crops. What happens to people who refuse to relocate? "We don't like to hear such reports

Campaign fever

If the Russians don't revert to their time-honored folkways—slaughtering each other in dizzying numbers—they will hold their second democratic presidential election on June 16.

Among the contenders there's an Ex, two "Y's" and two "Z's." *Ex*-president Gorbachev. The two good "Y's"—Yavlinsky the reformer and Yeltsin the president. Plus the two bad "Z's," Zhirinovsky, a Buchanan with no manners whatsoever, and Zyuganov, the head of a promising new party: the communists.

You can x "Ex" out. Gorbachev doesn't have a chance. Abroad, he is considered a distinguished statesman. In Russia he is considered the Stupidest Man Who Ever Lived. "The Only Leader in 1,000 Years to Turn Russia from a Mighty Power into a Beggar State"—is not really the best of campaign slogans. Not long ago one of Gorbachev's former security doubles was mistaken for his old boss on the streets of Moscow and roughed up pretty good until things got straightened out.

Yavlinsky is the yuppie candidate—smart, modern, stiff, a Russian Al Gore. The only candidate he'll beat is Gorbachev. For many Russians, Yavlinsky commits the unforgivable sin of being right and being boring about it. Worse, he doesn't seem like the kind of guy you'd want to have a drink with. To bolster his image—and his chances—Yavlinsky is now contemplating an alliance with military strongman General Alexander Lebed, a ticket about as appetizing as running Woody Allen with Mussolini.

Yeltsin has the blustery bulbousness of the boozer, a mix of Lyndon B. Johnson and W.C. Fields. It is true that the Russians hate him with a passion. But the Russians have never really had the wonderful opportunity—so often taken for granted in older democratic societies—of openly hating their leader. For 1,000 years the Russians were ruled by the hateful likes of Tsar Ivan the Terrible and Joseph Stalin and couldn't say a word about it or else hateful things would be done to them. Now able to hate to their heart's content, the Russians are reveling in what can only be called a "loathe-in."

Yeltsin will probably be re-elected for the simple reason that he is both hateable, and liberal enough to allow people to hate him openly. Yavlinsky is not interesting enough to be hateful, while the two "Z's" just might be hateful enough to suppress the free, open, public display of hatred.

Zhirinovsky, leader of the fascists who call themselves the Liberal Democrats, is a little Hitler still in the funny, Charlie-Chaplin-Great-Dictator stage. Though popular, Zhirinovsky is also known to be half Jewish. A half Jew could never rule Russia, birthplace of the pogrom. Though these are more progressive times, even a one-eighth Jew probably couldn't win the Kremlin. For this election at least, a vigorous anti-Semitism inoculates Russia against fascism.

But what about Zyuganov and the communists—will they bring back international tension and bad suits? Zyuganov, who has some of Newt Gingrich's chubby Kewpie-doll charisma, may prove to be an anachronism with a future. A lot of Russians are nostalgic for the good old days when everybody was poor but the country was strong, and those who were stealing you blind at least had the good taste to do it discreetly. For many voters, being an evil empire is better than being no empire at all.

What kind of leader could ever satisfy such contradictory needs and desires? It would take something that might be impossible even for Russia: a Tsar Stalin the Nice.

RICHARD LOURIE

RICHARD LOURIE is working on a novel titled *The Autobiography of Joseph Stalin.*

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from the West," bristles Fan Zheng Xin, an official in the mayor's office in Wanxian. "When it happens, we will go in and teach these people about service to our country." And if they continue to resist? "We will not arrest people; that's not part of the plan," says Fan.

But they are arresting people. According to a report by the human rights group Asia Watch, in May, 1992, 179 members of the Democratic Youth Party demonstrating against the dam were seized by the public security bureau in Wanxian. Their fate is still unknown. Asked about the incident, Wanxian official Fan says, "This simply never happened. It's probably rumormongering by people who have an ulterior motive to undermine the Chinese government." Yet classified documents obtained by Asia Watch suggest otherwise. "Hostile domestic and foreign forces show great 'interest' in the Three Gorges project," says a 1993 confidential police report from Wanxian, citing the crackdown against the Democratic Youth Party. The report urges an increase in the number of public security personnel "to forcefully attack serious criminal activities"—or risk facing "social shock and endless trouble in the future."

Meanwhile, the first resettlement of civilians has hardly been a model of equal opportunity. Yang Temin, 39, is among the first new residents of Jia Wan village, a relocation center a few miles from the dam site in Yichang. On a sunny afternoon, he's smoking and sipping tea at a table on the ground floor of a new two-story, white-tile building. Yang hasn't worked in a year and a half, but he received a $12,000 loan from the government (and an equal sum from relatives) to build his house and to buy the half dozen new pool tables on the dirt road that runs the three or four blocks of town.

Later arrivals to the village clearly won't have the same advantages. Jia Wan will fill up with business and political leaders—the local elite from around Yichang—who will own the shops and rent out the homes to latecomers, mostly peasants forced off the land they till. Far from offering most people a chance to make a new start, the government has essentially duplicated the social and economic composition of the original community—creating, in effect, a company town, complete with public security thugs who angrily question visitors about their business.

Upriver in Wanxian, where resettlement has begun, there is palpable confusion and fear. Cab drivers and merchants say they don't even want to think about their forced migration. "Everybody is nervous; the government has kept us in the dark," whispers a nun from the town's turn-of-the-century cathedral. "We don't know where or when we'll have to go. They haven't answered our questions, even though we've asked them to repeatedly."

The Three Gorges dam has developed a life of its own. Construction will go forward—whatever the toll in money and lives. Li Peng and other Beijing officials have too much of their political futures invested in the project to consider arguments about how a series of smaller dams could provide the same amount of electricity and flood control with less damage to the environment. There may be some resistance by those who can't bring themselves to leave the orange groves and rice fields they and their families have cultivated for centuries. Mostly, though, there's a crushing sense of resignation. "It doesn't matter what I think; the government says 'move,' so we'll move," says a Wanxian farmer in his 40s. "That's how it is in China."

TOM POST is a writer for "World News Tonight" at ABC News. GEORGE WEHRFRITZ is *Newsweek*'s Beijing bureau chief.

Postmodernism exposed.

SCIENCE FICTION

By Peter Berkowitz

Physicist Alan Sokal's article in the journal *Social Text*, submitted as a hoax and unwittingly published, has left its editors huffing with indignation. But beyond the bruised academic egos the episode raises an extraordinary question: What does it say about the state of academic life that leading scholars were unable to distinguish serious argument from utter nonsense?

It was in the pages of the May/June issue of *Lingua Franca* that Professor Sokal explained that his essay, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," was exactly as it appeared: a random assortment of arcane, jargon-infested abstractions. Filled with trendy pronouncements about the need to establish an "emancipatory mathematics," and a "liberatory science," it was, by its author's own account, devoid of both evidence and reasoned argument.

In the scandal's wake, *Social Text*'s editors have solemnly reproached Professor Sokal for violating the norms of the academic community, and it is certainly ironic that *Social Text*'s self-styled academic rebels, who pride themselves on putting playful mockery to good scholarly use, have suddenly become earnest defenders of gravity. But the serious questions, as Professor Sokal himself has pointed out, concern the habits of mind that permitted *Social Text* to publish a bold reinterpretation of an abstruse dimension of theoretical physics without soliciting the evaluation of anyone trained in the field. From whence did this arrogance derive?

No doubt many sources, but chief among them is the presumption inscribed in the very tenets of postmodern thought. Jean-François Lyotard famously defined the spirit of postmodernism as "incredulity toward meta-

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narratives." Postmodern incredulity should not be confused with the healthy skepticism that proclaims that human beings lack certain knowledge about what is good and just and true. Nor should it be mistaken for the intellectual virtue Mill called "many-sidedness"—the ability to discern the partial truth in rival perspectives—and which Mill saw as essential to the liberal spirit. Nor again should postmodern incredulity be taken for the quality that Keats called "negative capability," a quality "of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason."

For what the skeptical, liberal and romantic spirits share is philosophical modesty. Postmodern incredulity, by contrast, is boastful, haughty and dismissive. It combines a certainty that older views—views about nature, social and political organization, the moral life and religious faith—are wrong, with a disdain for the ignorant multitudes who have in the past or continue in the present to embrace them. Unlike the skeptic who insists, especially in connection to first things and ultimate questions, on the limits of our knowledge, the incredulous postmodernist knows that what was once believed to be true is absurd. In contrast to Millian many-sidedness, which takes pains to preserve what is true and worthy of admiration in traditional beliefs and institutions, postmodern incredulity focuses narrowly on what is supposedly false and pernicious. And, in contrast to the light touch and discriminating sensibility John Keats sought to capture in the notion of negative capability, postmodern incredulity heavy-handedly seeks to put uncertainties, mysteries and doubts to rest.

This conceit is beautifully captured in Sokal's opening summary of the perspective from which he proposes to develop a transformative hermeneutics of quantum gravity (whatever that means). Postmodernism knows the ultimate building blocks of reality: "It has become increasingly apparent," Sokal writes in *Social Text*, "that physical 'reality,' no less than social 'reality,' is at bottom a social and linguistic construct." And postmodernism knows that scientific knowledge is not really knowledge at all but culturally relative and an expression of class interest: "scientific 'knowledge,' far from being objective, reflects and encodes the dominant ideologies and power relations of the culture that produced it." As these assertions—in support of which Sokal adduces little more than the authority of the writings of *Social Text* editors and contributors—indicate, the postmodern study of science is grounded in, and derives much of its critical power from, metaphysical first principles. But the issue is less the validity of postmodernism's metaphysical first principles than the unquestioning credulity with which they are embraced by the faithful.

To hear, in the wake of the Sokal affair, such distinguished voices in the field of cultural studies as professors Andrew Ross, *Social Text*'s co-editor, and Stanley Fish, executive director of Duke University Press (which publishes the journal), one would think that postmodernism, or the social construction of knowledge school, argues simply that human beings bring meanings into the world and that these meanings, which grow out of and reflect human passions and prejudices, sometimes obscure reality and often serve the interests of the powerful. But this is disingenuous. What distinguishes postmodernism is the extreme and dogmatic belief that the principles of morality as well as reason itself are socially constructed—that is, created by human beings for pleasure and profit—and nothing more. Time and again postmodern critics have used this eminently debatable opinion to dispose of, with a single blow, the literary, scientific and philosophical achievements of the West. Moreover, they have drawn comforting democratic and egalitarian inferences from the principle that morality and reason are human constructs or creations, a principle that actually fits far more comfortably with the anti-democratic and inegalitarian conclusions that nothing is true, everything is permitted and justice is the advantage of the stronger.

Writing in his Introduction to the "Science Wars" issue of *Social Text*, Ross declares that the critique of the "cultural" or "critical" study of science has been led by "fresh conservative recruits" who have been "bankrolled and coordinated by the same right-wing groups" that have been fighting the Culture Wars. In the same issue his fellow editor, Professor Stanley Aronowitz, speaks ominously of "scientific conservatives and their publicists" who wish to silence "critical investigations of science and technology." This effort by Ross and Aronowitz to reduce the criticism of their ideas to cranky political motivations is a smokescreen. Indeed, the insight they claim is so daring of them to publicly defend—that technology threatens the environment and can be placed in the service of evil—is actually a staple of nineteenth-century Romanticism as well as twentieth-century conservative thought.

What is truly troubling about the "cultural" or "critical" study of science as it tends to be carried out in universities today is what is troubling about postmodernism in general. By teaching that the distinction between true and false is one more repressive human fiction, postmodernism promotes contempt for the truth and undermines the virtue of intellectual integrity. Those who have never performed an experiment or mastered an equation can, therefore, enjoy a sneering superiority based on the alleged insight that science is a form of literary invention distinguished primarily by its outsized social cachet.

It is postmodernism's ethics of intellectual inquiry that allowed Ross and his colleagues to believe they could adequately judge Sokal's paper despite their evident ignorance of its subject matter: physics. If only their blunder were an isolated example in the academy.

PETER BERKOWITZ is associate professor of government at Harvard University and the author of *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (Harvard University Press).

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Succeeding in School

Last week, I wrote about one of the important education books of the decade, *Beyond the Classroom* (Simon and Schuster, 1996), which provides a fresh perspective on the issue of poor student achievement. The authors, Professors Laurence Steinberg, B. Bradford Brown, and Sanford Dornbusch, say that looking at what the schools do is not enough. Unless we also consider the part that student attitudes and values play, we will never understand the problem, let alone solve it. And they offer some fascinating analyses of teenage culture and its effect on student achievement—both in general and by ethnic group.

The authors gathered much of their data from questionnaires administered to 20,000 high school students over a three-year period. The students mirrored the general population, with 40 percent drawn from ethnic minorities; and their schools included urban, suburban, and rural schools in rich, poor, and average communities. The authors discovered that many of these students are not "engaged" with their academic work and are inclined to do as little as possible. Most teenage peer groups reinforce this attitude. Should we be surprised that Steinberg and his collaborators found that lack of engagement is associated with low academic achievement?

Asian-American students tend to have a realistic idea of what leads to academic success.

The study also confirms the achievement gap between ethnic groups, with Asian-American students, on average, at the top, African-American and Hispanic students at the bottom, and white students in the middle. This tragic discrepancy is well known, but its cause is hotly debated and so is the way to cure it. Many people believe that the great numbers of black and Hispanic children living in poverty accounts for the low average achievement of students in these groups. Or, since poor communities tend to have poor schools, others put the achievement gap down to the inferior education poor black and Hispanic children may receive.

Steinberg, Brown, and Dornbusch say that their data point to something quite different. Their basic finding is that ethnicity *by itself* is a better predictor of student achievement than any other demographic factor:

> [O]f all the demographic factors we studied in relation to school performance, ethnicity is the most important. For example, even after we take into account the other demographic variables..., we find that the gap in grades between Asian students and black or Latino students is nearly twice as big as the gap between students from the poorest families in our sample and those from the most affluent.... In terms of school achievement...it is more advantageous to be Asian than to be wealthy, have nondivorced parents, or to have a mother who is able to stay home full-time.

Why would ethnicity make such a difference in achievement? Is it racism on the part of teachers who give out low grades to African-American and Hispanic students and good ones to the "smart" Asian-Americans? Steinberg and his colleagues discuss this possibility, but they believe that it is student attitudes that make the decisive difference.

Students from every ethnic group said it was important to be successful in school, but Asian-American students are far more likely to act on their belief. Regardless of the quality of the school they attend, they cut class less, do their homework more, and report high levels of interest and concentration. In other words, they are more engaged. And their friends tend to be youngsters who support them in these attitudes. Instead of kids who want success in school but sneer at doing the work required to achieve it, their friends are likely to value intellectual achievement.

Asian-American students, the authors found, also tend to have a realistic idea of what leads to academic success. They believe it depends on hard work rather than luck or favoritism or talent (as in being "good at math," which the authors call a typical and dangerous American notion about the nature of academic achievement). The kicker is that the more Asian-American students become Americanized, the less well they perform—which, incidentally, disposes of the idea that their success is based on genetic superiority. Assimilated, Asian-American students are no more successful than anyone else.

African-American students, on the other hand, are particularly hurt by the disengagement from school that characterizes the majority of American students. For them, this powerful tendency is magnified by a peer culture that considers academic achievement to be "acting white." Unlike Asian-American teenagers, who are likely to find support among their peers, African-American youngsters who are serious about schoolwork risk becoming outcasts.

What answers does *Beyond the Classroom* suggest for dealing with the problem of student achievement? The authors discuss the kinds of things parents can do to guide their children. But they acknowledge that parents cannot do it alone. We need external structures that signal to students that hard work and achievement are important and will be rewarded. Among the things they mention are national standards and examinations, a limit to the amount of time teenagers can spend in after-school jobs, and an end to remedial courses in four-year colleges. I couldn't agree with them more.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

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Can Republicans help the poor?

SWEET CHARITY

By Matthew Miller

While pundits debate whether longtime supply-side foe Bob Dole will change his stripes and call for across-the-board income tax cuts, the whopper he's already proposed has gone unscrutinized. Dole's call for a new "charity tax credit," issued in Philadelphia on May 23, got lost in that day's brouhaha over late-term abortion. But as a preview of the candidate's readiness to put expediency before conviction, the first Dole giveaway of 1996 doesn't bode well.

The plan, lifted from Indiana Senator Dan Coats and William Bennett by way of Lamar Alexander's failed campaign, would allow taxpayers to earmark $500 ($1,000 per couple) of what they'd otherwise owe in taxes to charities that devote 75 percent of their funds to poverty relief. In today's anti-government climate, the rhetorical appeal is hard to beat. "It would present Americans with a stark choice," Dole explained. "Give your money ... to the Department of Health and Human Services, or to Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity." Anyone think Donna Shalala stands a chance in that bake-off?

To be sure, the idea violates all of the GOP's latest pieties. As a tax subsidy for favored activity, it's a flat tax no-no; as a bribe for good behavior, it's hardly a lesson fit to inscribe in *The Book of Virtues*. But consistency is not the real problem; as conceived, the credit would be both costly and dangerous.

Start with its cost. Dole's people say it would run $20 billion a year; other analysts say it could be twice that. (On my calculator, $500 times America's 100 million or so tax filing units comes to $50 billion.) Like Senator Coats before him, Dole offers no clue as to how he'll pay for it. But the logical extension of Dole's anti-bureaucracy rhetoric is that the credit should be funded dollar-for-dollar by a reduction in the safety net programs it would "replace." At $20 billion, that means cutting both Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Food Stamps in half; at $50 billion, these programs are history.

The result? Combined with the way tax credits work, we're likely to see a big drop in overall aid to the poor and a corresponding spike in poverty. The main problem, as Robert Reischauer of the Brookings Institution points out, is that the tax credit will largely pay for charitable giving people already do. Say you're giving $300 a year to poverty-related charities now. The new $500 tax credit may prompt you to increase your giving by $200, since the federal government will let you subtract that full $500 off your final tax bill. But to finance this, AFDC spending is cut by $500. When the dust clears, you've given an incremental $200, but Health and Human Services spending has been reduced by $500, leaving a net reduction of $300 in aid to the poor. And this is optimistic: if you give more than $500 today, you might simply use the tax credit to make that first $500 a freebie, and do no incremental giving at all.

Among tax policy nerds, such outcomes amount to an axiom: tax credits meant to encourage certain behaviors invariably squander revenue to reward people for what they're already doing. President Clinton's new tax credit for two years of community college suffers from the same defect. But crafting a credit that spurs truly new activity has proven elusive; many analysts say it's impossible. By all accounts, for example, intricate schemes to reward incremental investment in business plant and equipment or research and development have flopped.

What's this mean for Dole? To argue credibly for the sharp cut in support for the poor his idea entails, he has to claim that charity-delivered aid is radically more "effective" than what government provides. But even assuming that charities that challenge aid recipients with spiritual reform are "better" than government handouts, there are still big reasons to think privatizing the safety net, as Dole essentially proposes, is a terrible idea.

For starters, poor people are concentrated disproportionately in distressed rural areas and inner cities. Phasing out the federal safety net in favor of a tax credit citizens can allocate as they like will thus create a mismatch between resources and needs. Since people tend to give locally, the few shelters and soup kitchens in Bethesda and Beverly Hills could install modern art in their lobbies, while those serving the poor in downtown Philadelphia would be overwhelmed by those who've been cut off by the feds. Even Marvin Olasky, Newt Gingrich's favorite welfare reformer, agrees that smoothing out this discrepancy is one of government's legitimate functions.

Then there's the Jim and Tammy Faye risk. With $20 to $50 billion in "free money" suddenly up for grabs each year, whichever charity has the most tear-inducing TV marketing campaign could win. Do we really want churches expanding their marketing departments to fight for their share of the pot? Or a new army of federal auditors making sure that organizations getting the money are, in fact, devoting 75 percent of it to poverty relief? If President Dole lays off HHS program officers only to replace them with IRS auditors, it's hard to see the gain for the republic.

Still, the Republican compassion crowd has a point: Don't we want more money going to groups that change lives in ways the average federal program can't?

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Robert Woodson, the black conservative who heads the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, says tiny grass-roots groups do the best work, but usually aren't "sophisticated" enough to apply successfully for government grants, or even for United Way support. Olasky, a conservative professor who with Arianna Huffington chairs something called the Center for Effective Compassion, argues that faith-based charities which require spiritual training as the price of shelter and drug counseling often work wonders, restoring self-esteem and reversing lost lives. Yet such groups are barred by constitutional church-and-state concerns from receiving government funds that could extend their reach.

Is there a way to take these sensible kernels and make a good initiative out of them instead of the costly mess Dole has offered? Here's a try. First, rather than give fresh windfalls to the well-off, offer the tax credit only to people with incomes too low to make the charitable deduction worthwhile today, and cap it at $100 (or $200 per couple). This would cost $5 to $10 billion, a fraction of Dole's plan, but would still dramatically boost the $11 billion in annual donations going to human services charities today. You could target distressed communities by limiting the zip codes in which recipient charities have most of their beneficiaries, as Woodson has suggested. And make more religious groups eligible for funding without constitutional risk by assuring, as Senator John Ashcroft of Missouri and Representative J.C. Watts of Oklahoma have proposed, that beneficiaries can choose options apart from religious rehab.

Here's the kicker: pay for the credit not by slashing safety net programs, but by shaving tax subsidies to wealthier Americans. Lowering the amount of principal on which mortgage interest can be deducted—from today's indefensible $1 million to $300,000—would do the trick. Think how "effective" the compassion trade-off thus becomes: a nip in housing aid to a million or so Americans who shouldn't get welfare anyway enables up to 80 million middle- and lower-income citizens to earmark $100 to grass-roots groups in need. True, it might be better to use the revenue from mortgage interest reform for general deficit reduction, but I'm willing to peel it off now if only to force the GOP's hand.

Openness to such change is a good sincerity test for Dole and his conservative compassion gang. It's hard to believe that Dole—whose firsthand experience of dependence inspires his oft-stated belief that "there are things government can do to help those in need"—has thought through the dire impact of his current proposal, or its contradictions with his own career. But he can't have it both ways. At a minimum, Dole should say he won't fund his charity tax credit by gutting the safety net he helped create. Then we'd really separate the GOP's saints from its sinners—those who think a big charity boost might actually curb poverty from those for whom the rhetoric of compassion is merely an electorally acceptable way to fleece the poor. •

John Lewis's American odyssey.

THE LAST INTEGRATIONIST

By Sean Wilentz

At ten past eight on a brisk Washington morning, Representative John Lewis of Georgia hurtled out of his cramped office suite in the Joseph P. Cannon Building and advanced on the Capitol a few blocks away. Burly and short (a little under 5'6"), he moved with the shoulder-heaving waddle of an out-of-shape former jock, though the only sport he has ever practiced seriously is protest-marching. More than thirty years ago, as national chairman of the legendary Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced snick), Lewis led civil rights demonstrations across the South and gained renown as a valiant, bloodied hero of the nation's greatest domestic struggle this century. Now, as a Democratic Chief Deputy Whip, he carries that reputation into fresh battles.

At Room H-230 inside the Capitol, Lewis attended a breakfast for the Georgia delegation, skipped the bacon and eggs and managed a strained but civil exchange with Speaker Newt Gingrich. At 8:35, he was out the door, headed for a Democratic leadership meeting. Sequestered with his colleagues, he listened politely and, on this day, said very little, a calm and retiring presence amid their banter about Gingrich's latest dip in the opinion polls. "Anyone who knows me will tell you," he had warned between meetings, "that I am not a whooper."

Lewis's modesty is unfeigned, but it is also deceptive. After thirty years, his everyday affect remains gentle and

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sweet-tempered, the antithesis of slickness. When he does speak up, his rural Alabama inflection leads him to slur his consonants. Yet, when the feeling is on him, Lewis is capable of delivering, in the Southern Baptist style, some of the most stirring oratory to be heard these days in Washington. And, in his recent set-tos with the Republicans, he has emerged as a leading Democratic spokesman and an adroit and implacable partisan scrapper.

Less than a month into the new Congress's first session, for example, Lewis began raising complaints about Gingrich's financial affairs; and, soon after, he called upon the House Ethics Committee to investigate Gingrich's videotape college course and his book contract with Rupert Murdoch. During the spring and early summer of 1995, while the ethics issue simmered, Lewis escalated his anti-Republican rhetoric, and snatches of it—"They're coming for the children. They're coming for the poor. They're coming for the sick, the elderly, and the disabled"—started turning up on the network news and in the national press.

Lewis's new, more combative stance has not gone unnoticed. Last August, after he participated in an Atlanta Labor Council demonstration against his Georgia Republican colleagues, a few of them questioned his fitness to serve in Congress. On the other side of the aisle, Minority Whip David Bonior has credited him for giving what Bonior calls "the Gingrich piece" of the Democratic strategy credibility. Jesse Jackson, meanwhile, told me that he has been buoyed by the return of "the vintage John Lewis."

Now 56 years old, Lewis is the strongest link in American politics between the early 1960s—the glory days of the civil rights movement—and the 1990s. Despite some crushing personal and political setbacks, he has persisted in preaching the doctrines that overthrew Jim Crow: racial integration, nonviolence, economic justice and the "beloved community"—his favorite phrase, by which he means both an end and a means, the good society and the movement devoted to achieving it. At a time when prominent black nationalists and even liberals such as Tom Wicker dismiss integration as either a tragic failure or a synonym for mere accommodation, Lewis sometimes feels isolated. Yet he has doggedly kept the faith and advanced through the congressional ranks, gaining power and influence that would have been utterly inaccessible to a black Southerner a generation ago.

It's a little surprising that of all the extraordinary SNCC organizers from the '60s—Robert Parris Moses, Julian Bond, Marion Barry, James Forman, Stokely Carmichael—Lewis has risen the highest. Thirty years ago, he was not known for his political skills or theoretical expertise. While more urbane SNCC intellectuals plotted strategy and studied Camus and Fanon, Lewis the grunt inspired the troops by quoting from Scripture and laying his body on the line. "John was not naïve, but he made no claim to political shrewdness," the former SNCC volunteer Mary King later recalled. Nor, at least until recently, did Lewis build much of a reputation in Congress as a powerbroker or policymaker. "He's a big-picture person who always approaches an issue from a moral standpoint," one Democratic staffer observed, "but he doesn't get as much into the nitty-gritty of legislative minutiae."

It is, rather, Lewis's extraordinary personal aura and his moral consistency that commands respect. In an era when politicians, and especially members of Congress, are in bad odor, stigmatized as trimmers and cowards, Lewis "goes with my gut," as he puts it, instead of heeding either powerful constituents or opinion polls. His eloquent speech in opposition to American entry into the Persian Gulf War—not a popular position for a Georgia politician to take—prompted Speaker Thomas Foley to tap him for the caucus leadership in 1991. Since then, Lewis has shown little hesitation in bucking large House majorities—and even, at times, his fellow Democratic leaders—over matters of conscience, as in his stalwart refusal to back federal laws expanding capital punishment.

Lewis's bravery is not merely metaphorical. "In the middle of a bunch of courageous young people, he was the most courageous," said Julian Bond, who served as SNCC's press secretary. During the famous 1961 Freedom Ride, in Montgomery, Alabama, and again four years later in Selma, armed segregationists nearly beat Lewis's brains out, leaving his head permanently dented and scarred. Like Bob Dole's crippled arm, or John McCain's sufferings as a prisoner of war, or Bob Kerrey's Medal of Honor and artificial leg, Lewis's civil rights travails mark an authentic experience of physical heroism of a sort that has become increasingly rare for Americans. Because Lewis earned his scars in a struggle to fulfill the promises of the Declaration of Independence, he shares with other civil rights heroes, living and dead, the mystique of a modern-day Founding Father.

All this makes Lewis virtually a Washington tourist attraction, a walking patriotic monument. "I think he's an absolute saint, one of the few saints in public life, to this day," said Burke Marshall, the distinguished professor emeritus at the Yale Law School and former head of the civil rights division at the Kennedy Justice Department. "Martin Luther King once said 'that unearned suffering is redemptive,' " noted *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne. "By that definition, John Lewis is a redeemed man."

The trouble with being a living monument, of course, is that you can end up with the political clout of one of the marble statues that line the Capitol rotunda. Lewis might have found himself turning into an icon of principled and doomed dissent. But anyone who watched him closely over the past decade would have noticed that somewhere along the line he acquired some practical political skills. In his first successful congressional race, in 1986, he exhibited a cunning, even cold-blooded campaigner's intelligence—and wound up defeating his ex-comrade, Julian Bond, who had been heavily favored to win. In the House, Lewis has, from the start, worked hard to secure goodies for his district, including a $300 mil-

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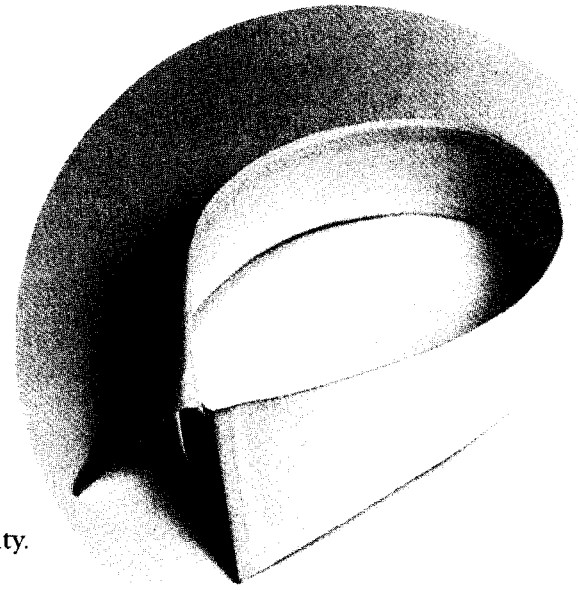
Is class, not race, the key to fixing affirmative action?



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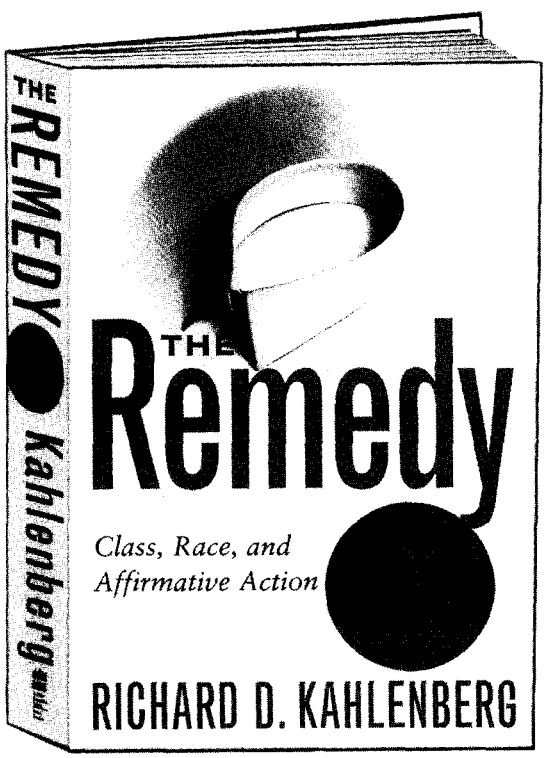

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lion federal building on a decaying edge of downtown Atlanta. And he seems to have figured out how to merge the past with the present, exploiting his moral authority and his SNCC experience in service to his party.

Congress, however, is not the street. "John ought to be in the top ranks of black leadership," Julian Bond observed, "but he's probably not, if you ask a hundred people on the corner." Bond ascribed Lewis's marginality largely to his normally unflamboyant style. "The leadership tends to go to flashier, showier figures, who may or may not deserve it," he remarked. "People who are media-savvy and out before the public." But Lewis's difficulties run deeper than that. Although Bond insisted that most black Americans still share Lewis's (and his own) integrationist "'60s values," he also admitted that large and growing numbers, embittered by the rightward political drift of the past thirty years, have abandoned them, while a smaller number of black conservatives have, for very different reasons, grown skeptical of Lewis's Great Society-style reformism. With this deepening polarization of black politics, Lewis's position looks increasingly precarious. And sometimes even Lewis's past contributions get lost in the shuffle. When high-profile journalists wish to evoke the black protests of the '60s, they are likely to trot out not John Lewis but Eldridge Cleaver or Maulana Ron Karenga.

Lewis has never had any truck with the new black Republicans. Nor, despite his public loyalty to the Clinton administration, does he embrace the neo-liberalism of the New Democrats ("What's wrong with being liberal?" he asked). Yet, by refusing to compromise his integrationist principles, he has also distinguished himself from those black intellectuals and activists on the left, including Jesse Jackson, who have sustained fragments of the black-power romance, stood beside race-baiting agitators like Al Sharpton and struck tactical alliances with Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam. "[T]he means by which we struggle must be consistent with the end we seek," Lewis enjoined during a PBS debate with Sharpton in 1994, on the subject of anti-Semitism and Farrakhan's lieutenant, Khallid Muhammad.

The breach between Lewis and his black critics caused a brief national sensation last October, when Lewis refused to participate in Farrakhan's Million Man March and then denounced Farrakhan as a bigot on the networks and in *Newsweek*. Angry letters, faxes and phone calls poured into Lewis's office from around the country; and for a time, it looked as if Lewis's stand would guarantee him a tough primary race in 1996. For years, after all, there had been quiet complaints, in both Atlanta and Washington, that Lewis was too much of a party man, too chummy with whites, that he had lost touch with the alienated, hopeless inner-city mood. "He used to be a grass-roots leader," grumbled Hosea Williams, once a top aide to Martin Luther King and now a community organizer in Atlanta, when I asked him about Lewis. Jesse Jackson, while singing Lewis's praises to me, also remarked that he has sometimes shown a propensity to be "party bound." Said Lewis aide Rob Basson: "They just feel that John Lewis isn't black enough."

Bob Herbert, *The New York Times* columnist, cautioned me about the media preoccupation with who is truly black. Herbert, who resents how white reporters and pundits have turned Farrakhan into a litmus test, finds it equally offensive even to mention Lewis and Farrakhan in the same breath. "John Lewis is a major figure in mid-twentieth-century American history," he remarked. "The only reason to link him up with Farrakhan is because he's black."

Lewis, meanwhile, sees it as ironic that his integrationist vision could ever be considered moderate, let alone conservative. "When you talk about integration," he told me, "some people think that it's old-fashioned, that it's out of date—that for a black person, it's Tommin', it's weak, it's passive. It is a radical idea. It's revolutionary to talk about the creation of the beloved community, the creation of a truly interracial democracy, a truly integrated society." His ideal of such a society is not, as his critics often imply, one of homogenization, whereby blacks would be forced to reject the heart and soul of their cultural heritage. "You can have an integrated society without losing diversity," he insisted. "But you can also have a society that transcends race, where you can lay down the burden of race—I'm talking about just *lay it down*—and treat people as human beings, regardless of the color of their skin." Yet he knows that, nowadays, there is an impression that his ideas are, at best, utopian, too trusting of white America's good intentions. "People think I'm sort of weird," he remarked.

As it happens, Lewis will face no opponent at all this year, either in the Democratic primary or in the general election. Thanks to an unusual Southern electoral coalition of working-class blacks and affluent white liberals and moderates, he has a lock on his Atlanta district; and the recent redrawing of Georgia's congressional district lines has only strengthened his position. He takes his personal good fortune as a sign that the Farrakhan enthusiasms of last autumn were never terribly formidable, even among those who participated in the Million Man March.

Still, he sometimes worries that, on the national level, his old cause may have entered a self-destructive phase in which racial solidarity has become a cover for fanaticism. He has been disturbed, he said, by the zeal of some members of the Congressional Black Caucus always to "do the black thing," an impulse that in 1994 led Kweisi Mfume to declare the existence of a "sacred covenant" between the caucus and the Nation of Islam (remarks that Lewis and his colleague Major Owens criticized, and that Mfume later retracted). He worries that the recent trend toward creating black-majority electoral districts will ensnare blacks in separate enclaves, the exact opposite of what the civil rights movement intended. He mocks younger, nationalist-oriented intellectuals and artists like Spike Lee who, he contends, have rewritten the past and romanticized figures like Malcolm X. "It's a replay of what we witnessed during

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the late '60s," he sighed, recalling the bleakest years of his life, when black-power chic blew SNCC to pieces, and the original civil rights radicalism fell apart.

At the Hunan Dynasty, an unpretentious outpost of upper Broadway on Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., Lewis is a regular patron. Though it was late in the dinner hour, the hostess greeted us warmly and prepared a table in a quiet corner; and by the time the sesame noodles arrived, Lewis was running on with reminiscences of the '60s. We had already spent considerable time together, but sitting beside him I noticed, for the first time, the old, inch-long scar that runs along the left side of his head, the badge of a blow from a segregationist's bludgeon.

Asked what he makes of his life thus far, Lewis recited some all-American, up-from-poverty clichés, but with the added twist that he felt as if he had been "picked up by the spirit of history." He uses the phrase often, conveying neither pride nor pomposity but genuine wonder at his fate—and at how he has repeatedly found himself playing a leading role in so many momentous political events. Only gradually and indirectly, as he recounts these events, does he disclose the deeper story, of how an inexperienced, idealistic movement leader evolved into an astute, idealistic Democratic leader.

JOHN LEWIS BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Had history not tracked him down, Lewis would today be a Baptist minister. Born in Troy, Alabama, in 1940, the third of ten children in a poor sharecropper's family, he was gripped by an intense religious fervor at about the age of 7. Having been given charge of the family's poultry yard, he began preaching to his captive flock, hypnotizing them with Scripture. "Chickens are very strange creatures," he mused, though not nearly as strange as he himself appeared to his family. Forsaking his other chores, preoccupied with his ministry, Lewis severely tried his parents' patience, especially when it came time to slaughter or sell off one of his congregants. Aghast, he would sob hysterically, boycott meals and refuse to speak for days on end. "My first nonviolent protest," he recalled dryly, only half-kidding.

Describing his boyhood, Lewis talked of the everyday indignities of segregation, of a widespread feeling of resignation among his neighbors and kin, and of the spectre of violence, some of it deadly, on both sides of the color line. "I grew up in a home with a shotgun over the door, and a rifle in the corner," he said. "On a Saturday night, you heard where people were being shot, where people were being cut and killed."

Lewis withdrew deeper into religion. At 15, he took to the pulpit in Baptist churches in and around his hometown, and gained a bit of fame in the pages of the *Montgomery Advertiser* as the "Boy Preacher from Troy." By chance, he also acquired his first hero, Martin Luther King Jr. King was an unknown Montgomery minister when Lewis heard him deliver a Sunday sermon over a soul-music station. Riveted by King's elegant delivery and his social-gospel message, Lewis decided to pattern himself on the man as much as possible, turning his sermons into attacks on segregation.

Too poor to attend King's alma mater, Morehouse College in Atlanta, Lewis enrolled at the affordable American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville in 1957, but then decided to try and break the color bar at Troy State College back home. Screwing up his courage, he wrote to King for help, and wound up meeting with him and winning a promise of legal assistance. The effort ended abruptly when Lewis's parents, fearing white reprisals, refused to go along and told him to be more cautious. But after he returned to Nashville, Lewis began attending a series of student workshops, run by the black pacifist theologian James Lawson of Vanderbilt, to study the works of Gandhi and Thoreau and to help plot a sit-in campaign aimed at the city's eating places.

In February 1960, galvanized by the famous Woolworth's sit-in at Greensboro, North Carolina, the newly formed Nashville Student Movement sprang into action. Lewis's first arrest came on February 27; he was arrested three more times over the next six weeks and became known to local officials as a student ringleader; and in April, he attended SNCC's founding conference in Raleigh. One of the fundamentals of the pacifist radical-

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ism he had learned from Lawson was the Gandhian doctrine of *Satyagraha* (literally, "truth-force"). It was one's duty, the doctrine ran, to openly violate unjust laws, and then to accept punishment, violent or not, in order to persuade oppressive authorities that violence was useless. SNCC's early recruits tried as best they could to put this daunting idea into practice.

Between 1961 and 1963, while Martin Luther King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) captured national headlines, SNCC's *satyagrahi* undertook black voter registration drives in violent Southern backwaters where no other civil rights organizations dared to tread. Lewis added to his own reputation for bravery when, after being invited to join the Congress of Racial Equality's (CORE) Freedom Ride bus demonstration, in May 1961, he led the group into its first affray, entering the "Whites Only" waiting room in the Rock Hill, South Carolina, bus terminal and getting knocked down and bloodied by a band of local toughs. Later, when attacks on the riders in Alabama persuaded CORE that to continue the demonstration would be suicidal, Lewis, along with some of his Nashville friends, carried on, only to get beaten again, even more severely, by a club-wielding mob at the Montgomery bus station. Lewis and the replacement riders finally ended the demonstration by getting arrested in Jackson, Mississippi, from whence they were sent for thirty days to the notorious Parchman Prison Farm.

Shortly after Lewis and the others departed Parchman in early September, the Interstate Commerce Commission issued a directive desegregating Southern busline facilities. Lewis quietly returned to his nonviolent protests and organizing work for SNCC. Two years later, having virtually desegregated downtown Nashville, he was named SNCC's national chairman. And two months after that, on August 28, 1963, Lewis stood uneasily on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, preparing to address 200,000 people.

Lewis's appearance at the March on Washington thrust him forward as the tribune of SNCC's growing militance. The march's organizers, the elder statesman A. Philip Randolph and his much younger protégé, Bayard Rustin, had hoped to use the occasion to pressure Congress into enacting pending civil rights legislation, and they wanted no hint of confrontation. But Lewis and his SNCC comrades, weary of living in perpetual dread of Klansmen and backwoods sheriffs and with no helpful federal response, drafted an angry declamation. They grudgingly toned it down at the last minute, at Randolph's request. Still, compared to King's "I Have a Dream" oration later that day, Lewis's speech—which criticized the Kennedy liberals, demanded massive help for the poor and called for a nonviolent social revolution—was incendiary, less a sermon on brotherhood than a call to resistance.

The speech made Lewis famous as the civil rights movement's *enfant terrible*. But, as movement insiders understood, Lewis's hotspur image was misleading. The mainstream civil rights leaders had always found him easier to work with than anyone else in SNCC. "His purity," Mary King later wrote, "made him appear more militant politically than he actually was."

In the summer of 1964, SNCC and CORE recruited hundreds of Northern white college students to help register black voters in the state that everyone acknowledged was segregation's strongest bulwark. "If we can crack Mississippi, we will likely be able to crack the system in the rest of the country," Lewis told a reporter as the project began. But Mississippi did not crack, at least not right away, and after months of futile toil amid constant terror, punctuated by the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, SNCC was gripped by a growing pessimism about the movement's basic principles. Some field organizers began to regard nonviolence not as a way of life but as an outmoded tactic. (Soon they would be surreptitiously packing firearms.) Many more SNCC volunteers, embittered by Northern liberal temporizing and by the obduracy of Southern racism, reassessed the virtues of racial integration and concluded that blacks had to organize on their own.

Lewis felt the shift in attitude, sympathized with aspects of it and tried to carve out a middle position. Late in 1964, he fortuitously encountered Malcolm X in Nairobi at the tail end of an official SNCC fact-finding trip to Africa (Malcolm was returning home from his famous journey to Mecca); and, after two days of intense conversation, he came away impressed with Malcolm's repeated renunciations of his earlier racial separatism. In February 1965, Lewis told a SNCC staff meeting that their primary purpose had to be "the liberation of black people," that white liberals and affluent blacks could not be counted on for support, and that both SNCC and the civil rights movement at large had to be "black-controlled, dominated, and led." But he rejected any suggestion that nonviolence be abandoned, or that sincere white supporters be spurned.

The Selma campaign in the winter and spring of 1965 brought still more intramural issues to a head. SNCC had been trying to register black voters in the city for two years, with meager results. Only when King and the SCLC arrived on the scene, late in 1964, did the national media begin paying attention, which outraged SNCC volunteers, who were fed up with seeing King—"De Lawd," they called him—get all the credit for their hard work. Unable to persuade SNCC to endorse King's operation, Lewis agreed, on his own, to join an SCLC march from Selma to Montgomery on March 7.

Walking at the head of the column beside Hosea Williams, carrying a knapsack containing a toothbrush, toothpaste, some fruit and two books (Richard Hofstadter's *The American Political Tradition* and a volume by Thomas Merton), Lewis reached the apex of the humpbacked Edmund Pettus Bridge leading out of town, and saw before him a sea of blue: upwards of 200 Alabama state troopers, sheriff's deputies and posse members on horseback brandishing bull whips, cattle prods and batons wrapped in barbed wire. The marchers knelt and prayed. Within seconds, tear gas was billowing over them, and the posse

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was trampling the fallen front lines, smashing limbs and splattering blood all the way back to town. Lewis lay on the ground with a fractured skull and a concussion. ("I saw death," he later remarked.) That night, the nation, including President Lyndon Johnson, watched film of the beatings on television.

The Selma incident jolted Johnson and Congress into passing the Voting Rights Act later that year. Lewis was hailed louder than ever as a national hero. But, inside of his own organization, his position was tenuous. James Forman, SNCC's longtime executive secretary, latched on to the new mood and began regarding Lewis as an expendable patsy. One of the most talented of the new organizers, Stokely Carmichael from Howard University, became the favorite of those who thought Lewis should be replaced. "If you took a clear look at John Lewis, he looked more like a young Martin Luther King Jr. than anything else," recalled Carmichael, now known as Kwame Toure. "Our direction was clear, with a heavy emphasis on nationalism. And strong, as strong as Malcolm had it, as strong as we could get it." Push came to shove at a SNCC leadership gathering in May 1966. Lewis resigned from SNCC soon after, and, under Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, the organization slid toward black-power extremism. Lewis landed a job with the liberal Field Foundation in New York. Increasingly depressed, a small-town Southerner cut loose in Manhattan, he holed up nights in his Chelsea apartment, drinking six-packs of Rheingold beer and reading long letters from his friend Julian Bond, who had won election to the Georgia legislature and had also quit SNCC.

In March 1968, Robert Kennedy announced his presidential candidacy. Lewis immediately volunteered and was sent to work on organizing the Indiana primary campaign, his first direct involvement in mainstream electoral politics. Shortly past sundown on April 4, 1968, while awaiting Kennedy's arrival at an outdoor rally in the middle of the Indianapolis ghetto, Lewis received word that King had been shot in Memphis. Turning up late, and without his usual police escort (which had refused to enter the neighborhood), Kennedy, stricken, clambered atop a flatbed truck and improvised what many consider the greatest speech of his life, quoting Aeschylus from memory to his grief-stricken black listeners, remarking that his brother had also been killed by a white man, pleading for calm and racial harmony. Two months later, Lewis was part of the select gaggle of friends and campaign staff who assembled in Kennedy's hotel suite in Los Angeles to celebrate the candidate's victory in the California primary. The two men bantered awhile, until Kennedy abruptly withdrew, saying that he had to give his acceptance speech in the ballroom below. Kennedy told Lewis to stick around; he would be right back.

After 1968, with King and Kennedy dead and with Richard Nixon in the White House, Lewis watched black protest politics go haywire. "You put on a dashiki, you let your hair grow long and you get an Afro, okay," Lewis later remarked, "but you're not doing anything to change the lives and conditions of poor people." While a few young movement veterans, notably King's former aide Andrew Young, entered electoral politics, Lewis, not yet fully recovered from his ouster from SNCC, struggled back to his feet.

He found a suitable niche at the Southern Regional Council's Voter Education Project, where for seven years he oversaw the registration of tens of thousands of Southern blacks, including his mother, under the Voting Rights Act. In 1976, after Jimmy Carter's election, the political tide briefly shifted. Carter plucked Andrew Young out of the Congress to become his ambassador to the United Nations, and Lewis ran for Young's Atlanta seat, finishing a respectable second to a popular white liberal, Wyche Fowler. Carter immediately appointed Lewis associate director of ACTION, where he worked on federally funded community organizing efforts. In 1980, he quit, and a year later won election to the Atlanta City Council.

In 1986, when the congressional seat for Atlanta once again fell vacant, Lewis decided to run. But then, coming out of nowhere, Julian Bond entered the race as the darling of Atlanta's black elite. Bond had movie-star looks and a silver tongue, backed up with plenty of money and endorsements from big-time Democrats, including Ed Koch and Edward Kennedy. Although local civil rights veterans were badly torn, most of them wound up supporting Bond, including (privately) Andrew Young, who was by this time Atlanta's mayor. Given that there was little difference between Bond and Lewis on the issues, Bond should have won easily, and he nearly did, polling almost half the votes in a five-way preliminary primary. But, having failed to gain a clear majority, Bond had to face Lewis in a run-off. And Lewis, having learned some lessons from 1966, decided to play political hardball.

Lewis's strategy centered on making a virtue of his plainness, conjuring up a clash of styles that dated back to the '60s. Although both men had been SNCC heroes, Bond had been the charming press secretary, working safely behind the battlelines at the group's Atlanta headquarters, telling SNCC's story to Northern reporters—while Lewis actually *was* the story, risking life and limb. Since then, Lewis had remained the sturdy, hardworking man of the people, while Bond, although active in the Georgia legislature, found time to revel in the celebrity limelight—a snappy dresser and jetsetter who turned up regularly on national TV, including a host appearance on "Saturday Night Live." "Vote for the tugboat, not the showboat," was one of Lewis's campaign mottoes, and the theme began attracting two key constituencies: working-class blacks, who felt neglected by the city's well-connected black leaders, and more moderate and conservative whites, who breathed easier voting for the homely John Lewis than for the glitzy Julian Bond.

Lewis narrowly won the election, but he lost an old and dear friend, a kindred spirit in the larger political scheme of things. It would be several years before the two men patched things up.

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A decade later, Lewis has solidified his base in Atlanta; and in its own modest way, his local rainbow coalition has proven far sturdier than Jackson's failed national effort. But in general, American politics, and especially Southern politics, are even more racially divided today than in 1986. There are more blacks than ever in Congress, but most of the newcomers owe their success to court-ordered racial gerrymandering, which has made interracial coalition-building more difficult. Thirty years after the Selma march, the South has reverted to a region of two racial parties, with the conservative white party—formerly the Democrats, now the Republicans—once again in the ascendancy. Nationwide, Republican leaders, having reaped the long-term electoral advantages of Richard Nixon's old Southern strategy, make half-hearted noises about reaching out for black support, while the Democrats dither about how they can regain moderate white voters without endangering their black base. Into the vacuum have stepped figures like Farrakhan.

In the face of all this, Lewis upholds what he sees as the true legacy of 1968: "When Dr. King organized the Poor People's campaign, he said that the next great movement in America must not be a civil rights movement per se, but it must be a movement of those who have been left out and left behind," Lewis told me recently. "You're talking about class. Maybe I'm treading into some dangerous areas, but I don't see any more significant or great victories in terms of race. The beloved community, if we get there, it will not be traveling down a racial path." Lewis insists that he sees early signs of an interracial liberal renewal. "I think we're at the beginning of something," he said in his office, encircled by his photographs of protests past. "We're on the edge, or maybe it's the advent, or something. I can feel it as I move around. But individuals must come forward with a sense of vision."

That was Lewis's mystical side talking, and on first hearing it all sounded far-fetched. Given the failure of President Clinton's health-care initiative, given the anti-government mood that cuts across the political spectrum, the prospects for any grand liberal departure seem quite distant. Likewise, although the separatist impulse in black politics may, as Lewis suspects, have largely run its course, that is no guarantee that Lewis's more generous, optimistic, integrationist vision, rooted in the '60s and the Southern black church, can soon replace it, especially among poor younger blacks in the larger metropolitan areas.

Nor do the prevailing liberal orthodoxies on race and related matters offer much assurance that Lewis's predictions will come true. Since the '60s, American liberals have generally found themselves tangled up in a false dichotomy, favoring government intervention to alleviate social and economic inequality, while disparaging calls for widened private opportunity and individual self-improvement as reversions to callous, dog-eat-dog, laissez-faire capitalism. And after the '60s, American liberalism became closely identified with race-based formulas for social and political justice, above all affirmative action and electoral gerrymandering—formulas which, even with all of their obvious benefits in bringing millions of the once-excluded into the mainstream of American life, have paradoxically undermined the building of sturdy interracial coalitions.

If Lewis's projected liberal revival is to succeed, he and others will have to shake up these liberal orthodoxies. More than many liberal Democrats, he is forthright about the necessity of encouraging private enterprise, investment and moral uplift among the down-and-out, pursued in creative tension with the more familiar government-sponsored programs to provide the disadvantaged with better jobs and schools and housing. Although Lewis stoutly defends the principles of affirmative action and race-based districting, he is also aware of their limitations and possible abuses. With respect to affirmative action, he is sympathetic to the idea of eventually gearing programs to class and not strictly to race, in part to prevent affluent individuals from gaining advantages solely because they happen to be black. On electoral districting, he would like to see racial guidelines altered so that "black" districts would be less solidly black—giving black candidates a fair shot at winning elections, but only if they reach out for white support (and, as a corollary, compelling candidates in "white" districts to gain minority support).

In short, although Lewis has managed to find ways to merge the past and the present, the '60s and the '90s, inside the House Democratic caucus he and his allies will have a much tougher time doing so in the nation at large. Still, what is remarkable about John Lewis is that he is in a powerful position to try. If the Democrats recapture the House this November, the new majority leadership is bound to be much more aggressive than during the Foley era—and Lewis, his stature enhanced by his contributions over the past two years, will be in the thick of things more than ever. Even if the Democrats fail, Lewis will remain near the pinnacle of his party's leadership—the only African American in the leadership of either party of either house. Whatever the electoral outcome this fall, he will have finally regained the national stage that he last occupied a third of a century ago, when as a mystical 23-year-old firebrand he scared the living daylights out of people at the March on Washington. And he will do so having learned the hard way about the rougher imperatives of political life.

When last we met, back in May—exactly thirty years after his ouster as SNCC's chairman—Lewis was in high spirits, and he tried to explain what was the same and what was different for him. He mentioned his abiding belief in marking off and sticking to immutable principles; he also spoke of how, as an elected politician and no longer simply a movement politician, he had to know when to cut a deal, to stick it to his opponents, to be practical. "I like winning," he suddenly interjected, breaking into a mischievous smile. "I like winning, I really do. I don't like to lose." •

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All in the family

My family tree does not branch. It never has. As with many black families in the rural South, the distinction between nuclear and extended faded long ago. Today, as it has been for centuries, cousins are siblings, aunts are mothers, uncles are fathers. While I recognized that some of my relatives had different fathers, the concept of "illegitimacy," often presented as the crux of America's moral decline, was foreign to me. Southern black families don't see the need to make social pariahs of children who have no control over the circumstances of their birth. It's not just that we were unable to replicate the Ozzie and Harriet model; we subconsciously rejected it as undesirable, alienating in its quest for invented separation of blood from blood.

The moralists of the radical right would have me believe I grew up in the midst of immorality. Granted, my family had its share of alcoholics, and failed marriages and domestic abuse. But, far from being the cause of these sufferings, our unconventional, multilayered family structure protected against them, and against what caused them: the deep poverty, hopelessness, and occasional terror, of black life in the South. From the same patch of the South Carolina Midlands, generations in my family weathered the departures and celebrated the homecomings this culture brought about. What sustained us was a reliance upon each other.

It worked on its own terms, and, after all, we had nowhere else to go. But now, for the first generations of black Southerners with a chance at the middle class, the disjunction between white and black family life is causing tremendous problems. While barely visible outside this small group of young black strivers, it represents a formidable obstacle to upward mobility and a tremendous emotional strain.

Walk around the mainly white campus of an elite college today, and you will meet young, gifted black men and women from such little-noticed locales as Cadiz, Kentucky, and Eufala, Alabama. Before them lie tremendous financial opportunities. The day after graduation, they can earn many times what their parents do. And if they save a good portion of their high-flying salary, and use it to create a small household of their own, their children will grow up with all the chances white kids have.

Simple enough, right? Actually, wrenchingly difficult. The deep logic of black and rural family life means that resources—medical care, tuition, whatever—are spread to whomever needs them most. Denying them to cousins, aunts, uncles, because they are "only" cousins, aunts, uncles is not merely alien, but offensive. For people with decent salaries but no inherited wealth, this endless succession of family obligations can make it impossible to accumulate wealth. Everyone survives, but people with the ability and opportunity are prevented from moving ahead.

Except, of course, for those who turn inward, providing only for self, spouse and their issue. But this choice, too, has its costs. Sharing those elite campuses with the strivers from Eufala are black kids from Scarsdale and Greenwich: the offspring of the last generation of black success stories—success stories partly because they adopted white patterns of family life.

In my college experience (at Harvard), it was more often than not these students—Cosby kids run amok—who spoke most stridently for black solidarity and a return to the tranquil collectivity of Mother Africa. All the while, they stratified the African American community on campus into what one friend described as the "inner-circle, periphery, and Third World."

Relegated to a place somewhere between periphery and Third World, I found it ironic that I was ostracized by this radical bourgeoisie when it seemed clear to me that the kind of connectednesss they craved was precisely what I had grown up with in my sleepy Southland. Most of Harvard's self-anointed grade-A Negroes viewed the South (with the possible exception of Atlanta) as a garden patch of backwards, dull-witted, steppin' fetchits. The in-crowd did not have, nor did they want to have, all manner of aunts, uncles and cousins living under their roofs. They had grown up with just parents and children—"normal" nuclear families.

The parents of these kids had faced the same choices I now have to make: to cut the family ties and create financial stability for themselves or attempt to help any and all relatives. They chose the former. Their kids, having grown up in middle-class, integrated environments, assumed the ideals of their white counterparts. Each group underwent a startling transformation during the "self-discovery" of their college years. Preppy, well-scrubbed black kids from suburbia transmogrified into saggy jeans-wearing, ghetto rhetoricians, reflecting the images of blacks adapted from the prevailing urban aesthetic. They scorned the family-centered principles of the rural South and the spiritual attraction of the black church in favor of the craven, secular, egocentric braggadocio of rap culture.

My fellow students came from black families who had bought completely into the American dream. Little wonder that they had unknowingly become yet another generation of Gunnar Myrdal's "exaggerated Americans." Only this time, they weren't zealous Negroes eager to prove their patriotism by dying on foreign soil. Now it was their allegiance to the liberal middle class they were proving, taking on all its values—including its penchant for cultural experimentation and comfortable rebellion. In short, the boojie insurgents at Harvard were really no different from the crunchy-feely white granola kids from the North. College was their four-year playground, to be forgotten at graduation as they took respectable jobs in the private sector.

Many of the Southern kids from small towns adopted a bemused attitude toward our brethren and toward the campus dialogue they helped create. But beneath the bemusement lay the anxiety of looking into a generational crystal ball and seeing the emptiness that material success can bring. The irony is that the highly individualistic, radical-chic silliness of the angry black pre-yuppies, while glorified as African, was deeply American. Perhaps too deeply American. I came away from the first rung on my ladder to upward mobility strangely radicalized: finding the mindset undergirding white America's family structure unappetizing, and its militant African American parallel equally so.

I can't really abide a narrow conception of family that cherishes each relation to its appropriate degree. Grandma and Grandpa receive the requisite hug and kiss. Cousins elicit a modicum of detached fond regard. I'm still close enough to an alternative to see the price of that model. Maybe I'll reject it after all, upward mobility be damned.

JOHN SIMPKINS

JOHN SIMPKINS is a student at Duke University Law School.

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Human Wrongs

For the past six years, the group called Human Rights Watch has conducted an annual International Film Festival. The seventh has now arrived and, once again, it is important.

A few impressive details. The festival will present forty-one films and videos from fifteen countries—there were 700 submissions—about conditions of life and death in many parts of the world. Included are a retrospective of the Korean director Park Kwang-Su and a series from Israeli and Palestinian filmmakers, done since the 1993 peace accords were signed. The festival opened at the Walter Reade in New York and will play in Boston, Seattle, Palm Springs and St. Louis before it moves on to Asia, Latin America and Europe. It's hard to believe that any sentient human being will fail to find items of unusual interest in the fifteen-day series.

Quality varies, naturally, but our expectations have a right to remain high. I've never been able to see more than a fraction of any one series, but I've never seen a film that has not been the work of a competent professional.

For instance, the one film I've seen so far of this seventh series. **Hunters of Utopias** is a documentary made in 1995 in Argentina by David Blaustein (Argentinian despite his non-Hispanic name). He brings us the experiences and ultimate observations of thirty-three survivors of tyranny—the militaristic nationalist regime that brutalized Argentina from 1976 to 1983.

Is one picture worth a thousand words? Then what's the worth of a picture that's accompanied by, is a forum for, words? Anyone who thinks the term "talking heads" must be pejorative should see and hear these heads talking: of what they worked for, how they struggled, how they survived. None of them (in the subtitles, anyway) uses the words "conquered" or "won." All of them would be sickened by any hint of jubilation. They are the ones who have, incised in them, what happened to them and who know what the opening title tells us: 30,000 of their companions are still missing.

All of these people, of course, were, or were said to be, politically left of center. To an American ear, it sounds odd—happily so—to hear the terms and ideas that were at issue; most of them are concepts of justice that were, at least in ideal, well woven into the American fabric in this century.

Anyone who has read such a book as David Rock's *Authoritarian Argentina* will note that one virulence goes unmentioned: the vicious anti-Semitism of the nationalist regime. Anyone who has read Jacobo Timerman's *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number* will know the varieties of torture that, for the most part, go unspecified in Blaustein's film. But there's enough. It braids newsreel clips with interviews in a 145-minute tribute to people who were stripped of everything but courage.

Is the word "festival" applicable to a series devoted to the terrors and tribulations of our world? I would vote yes. It's heartening to know that, in recent years, 700 people around the world made films and videos on these subjects. Yes, it would be better if there were no reason for those films to be made, for Human Rights Watch to exist. But meanwhile ...

Who Killed Pasolini? (Roxie) is not part of the film festival, but it could be—which is only the first compliment I'd pay it. (Its U.S. premiere, before national release, is at the Film Forum in New York.) Marco Tullio Giordana's film, written by himself with Stefano Rulli and Sandro Petraglia, starts with the murder of the poet-novelist-filmmaker-activist Pier Paolo Pasolini; then it investigates the inquiry and the trial of the murderer. Most of the facts are familiar to those who followed the case, but Giordana has organized them skillfully to emphasize the possible political implications. What seemed at first one more ghastly murder of a gay man by a pickup—like Marc Blitzstein, for instance—quickly took on other colorations; and they were why Giordana made his film.

I can still feel the shock when I read the news on November 3, 1975. (I still have the *Times* clipping.) Quite presumptuously, no doubt, I felt a personal stab. I had been at the Venice Film Festival in 1964 when *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* had its premiere and the rightist demonstrators shouted and whistled and scattered leaflets as the lights lowered, protesting the fact that a film on this sacred subject had been made by a Red faggot. And I remember how quickly the protest dwindled as the beauty of the film became manifest.

A few years later Pasolini came to New York for the premiere of another film, and he consented to appear with me on a TV series I then conducted on the PBS station. He spoke no English; his distributor said a translator would be provided.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Cold Comfort Farm. *Stella Gibbons's comic novel of 1932, about a la-de-da London miss suddenly set down among rustic troglodytes. Wittily and winsomely done. (Reviewed 5/27/96)* **Flirting with Disaster.** *A young man's quest for his biological parents. Exceptionally funny, sexy and sharp. (4/22/96)* **The Horseman on the Roof.** *Provence in the 1830s. Swashbuckling. Romantic. An Italian refugee and a beautiful French aristocrat. Enjoy. (6/17/96)* **Twister.** *Still another special-effects masterpiece. Ignore the story, etc. Go and be blown away by tornadoes. (6/10/96)* **—SK**

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Pasolini arrived with a young woman who, I soon heard, had even less English than I had Italian. I had prepared questions that I thought worthy of him, and apparently they were adequately conveyed. He answered animatedly and at length. The young woman summed up his remarks in short cryptic subtitles. (I was told that the tape was wiped soon after the broadcast or I'd have tried to get a translation.)

They were looking at the tape in the control room when we came out of the studio. I pointed at the small screen, and Pasolini recoiled in disgust. I thought this was amusing because he was strikingly handsome.

Carlo De Filippi plays Pelosi, the young male hooker who admitted the murder and was given a nine-year sentence; De Filippi gives the role the air of a pawn in several games. A fine legal point was involved in the case. If Pelosi had committed the murder alone, he would be sentenced as a juvenile. If adults had been with him, the sentence would be much graver. Pasolini's friends and some of the police believed that there had been accomplices, that fascist higher-ups had used this political agitator's homosexuality as a means of rubbing him out. Presumably some sort of arrangement had been made with Pelosi to take the rap. (He was astonished when he got as much as nine years.) But the presence of accomplices, and thus the political connection, was never adequately proved.

Giordana begins with the police stopping an Alfa Romeo late at night on the road near Ostia, Rome's seaport. Pelosi, alone, is driving dazedly. The police then trace matters back to the grungy part of the beach where Pasolini's mutilated body is found. The story explodes from there, interwoven with black-and-white newsclips, including glimpses of Franco Citti, who was in several Pasolini films, Alberto Moravia, Bernardo Bertolucci and Francesco Rosi.

Rosi's appearance is particularly apt because Giordana seems to have used his work as a model—black-and-white verity woven with color re-enactment in the dramatization of non-fiction subjects. Giordana keeps it all pulsing and pungent, aided greatly by the editing of Cecilia Zanuso and the lighting of Franco Lecca. Giordana's finely cinematic docudrama presses questions home, especially the one in the title. •

A New Nadezhda

BY THEODORE DRAPER

Back in Time
My Life, My Fate, My Epoch
by Nadezhda A. Joffe
translated by Frederick S. Choate

(Labor Publications Inc., 245 pp., $21.95)

Rarely does one come across a book that makes one sad enough to cry and yet able in the end to celebrate the indestructibility of the human spirit. This is such a book. Much of it is painful to read. The reader can get only a glimpse of what it took to survive in the political and social inferno that its author describes. Yet there were survivors, and one more survivor has lived, by chance, to tell the tale.

She is Nadezhda A. Joffe. The name Joffe used to mean something. Adolf A. Joffe was her father. He came from a wealthy Jewish family and joined the Russian revolutionary movement as a teenager, at the turn of the twentieth century. After finishing secondary school, he went to Germany to study medicine but completed his course in Vienna. There, in 1908, he began to collaborate on the newspaper *Pravda*, which was edited by Trotsky. He was thus one of the earliest Trotskyists, and he remained loyal to Trotsky to the end. After returning to Russia, he was arrested in 1912 and exiled to Siberia, from where he hastily departed to take part in the revolution of February 1917. He belonged to Trotsky's interparty group, which became part of the Bolshevik Party in August 1917, and, as chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee, Joffe played a principal part in the October insurrection.

After the Bolshevik revolution, Joffe emerged as one of the outstanding Soviet diplomats. Toward the end of 1917, he headed the first Soviet delegation to the Brest-Litovsk conference with Germany. For a time he was Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He then went to Germany as the first Soviet ambassador. After being expelled from Berlin for openly supporting the abortive German uprising in November 1918, he was busy heading various commissions and delegations assigned to make peace with the Baltic countries and Poland. In 1922, he was made Ambassador Extraordinary to China and Japan, his last important post. In Japan, he was stricken with a disease that forced him to return to Moscow, where he lived in great physical pain. Unable to continue with his diplomatic career, he was appointed Rector of the Chinese University in Moscow and finally served as Trotsky's deputy on a minor commission.

On November 12, 1927, Trotsky was expelled from the party. Four days later, Joffe shot himself. He left a lengthy letter to Trotsky, which Nadezhda publishes in full. It is a painful document in which Joffe explains that "my death is the protest of a fighter who has been brought to such a state that he can react to so shameful a deed [Trotsky's expulsion] in no other way." His funeral served as the last public demonstration of the Trotskyist opposition, and Trotsky's eulogy at the funeral was his last public speech in the Soviet Union.

Adolf Joffe was thus one of the most prominent early figures in the Bolshevik regime. But once Stalin began to emerge as the all-powerful ruler of the Soviet Union, Joffe carried a stigma that he could never shake off: he was a Trotskyist. He killed himself because his physical suffering was so intense, but also because he wanted to shock the country against Stalin's imminent takeover.

Such was the background of Nadezhda Joffe's early life. She knew all of her father's friends and colleagues; she attended the important Plekhanov Institute of People's Economy in Moscow. After Trotsky's expulsion and her father's death, she became an active Trotskyist and began to engage in anti-Stalinist activity. In 1929, she was arrested. "I was seven months pregnant," she writes, "and therefore, in those relatively liberal times, they didn't hold me in prison, but had me sign a note that I would not escape and then summoned me for interrogation." After the birth of her daughter, she was sent into exile for three years. She was 23 years old. Her husband, Pavel, was expelled from the party because he was married to a Trotskyist; he was exiled and soon shot.

Her first exile was not too bad, and she subsequently managed to get back to Moscow. "All these events were like 'blossoms'," she writes, "compared to the

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'berries' of 1937." In 1936, when she was 30, she was arrested again. All the wives and former wives of the Trotskyists were arrested. They were sentenced under Article 58—betraying the motherland. By this time the fierce Stalinist terror was striking at hundreds of thousands. The great purge trials were on. She was given a five-year sentence and sent to the camp at Kolyma in the forbidding northeastern part of Siberia, from which she did not return for ten years.

The great merit of Nadezhda's book is that it tells what life was like in the Siberian camps from the bottom up. There were several types of prisoners. KRDs signified "Counterrevolutionary Activity"; KRTDs meant "Counterrevolutionary Trotskyist Activity"; ChSIRs were family members of a "traitor to the motherland"; later mass arrests were made according to nationality, such as Daghestanis and Chechens; finally came the criminals. Of all these, the Trotskyists were treated the worst: their work category was "hard physical labor" and release "five minutes before death." Sometimes it was difficult to understand why some categories of prisoners arrived en masse in a camp. Nadezhda notes that in 1937 "people were arrested who had nothing to do with any Opposition. They were almost always hard-line Stalinists who had once fought against the Opposition."

There was a difference between a German camp such as Auschwitz and a Soviet camp such as Kolyma, to which Nadezhda was sent. The Germans simply put their victims to death. Most of the Soviet victims died from filthy conditions, inhuman overwork and sustained undernourishment. According to the Russian historian Vadim Z. Rogovin, who has studied the Soviet archives, about 4 million political prisoners were arrested during the Stalin period, ending in 1953. Those actually shot numbered between 700,000 and 800,000. A majority of both these categories came in the two-year period of 1937-1938.

Nadezhda served three sentences. She was liberated the second time in 1941, but she could not get out of the region owing to the war and did not return to Moscow until 1946. She was arrested for the third time in 1949 as a "repeater," a category introduced by V.S. Abakumov, the new head of the secret police. To show his Stalinist zeal, Abakumov ordered the rearrest of those who had already been freed. It was the period of Stalin's last mania, leading to the Jewish doctors' trials. Until then, according to Nadezhda, whether one was Jewish or not did not matter in the camps. In 1953, however, anti-Semitism became state policy, and a returning visitor to Moscow "described how the situation there was terrible: the anti-Semitism bordered on an atmosphere of pogroms." Nadezhda expected the worst. Fortunately Stalin died, and this black cloud of approaching horror passed away.

In the years in the camps, Nadezhda suffered and survived. In one camp in Kolyma, twenty women lived in one tent. In an adjoining tent was a workshop in which the women cleaned old jackets and coats. Barbed wire surrounded both tents. "I tried to understand on what basis these twenty people were selected," Nadezhda writes. "Just as with everything else which happened, in this process there was neither rhyme nor reason. The majority of the women were Communists, but there were also completely accidental figures."

One day, a new commandant, Colonel Garanin, arrived. (He is mentioned in the second volume of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago.*) Nadezhda had reason to remember him:

> Garanin stood near the entrance. We passed by closely, and I glanced at him. He looked at the people walking by him as if they were glass—he looked through them. In the yard stood a group of prisoners. We stopped near the doors of the dining area, and I looked around. Garanin was approached by some prisoner, who was all bent over, as if he were hunchbacked. He shuffled his feet and coughed, evidently trying to gather the courage to say something. "Comrade director, I am very sick. I ask you to let them transfer me to lighter work. I beg you...." He seemed to say something else, but I couldn't hear what it was. Garanin suddenly came to life, gave a start, and only then did I grasp that it was he who had taken a revolver out of his holster. "You don't want to work...," followed by a string of obscenities. And he shot him point-blank. The man fell to the ground.

Nadezhda did all sorts of jobs. At one time she washed barracks for 200 people. Their double bunks were incredibly filthy, covered with human waste. "People were simply too lazy to go to the latrine. How many buckets of water I had to carry." She was transferred to a fishing village, where she painted apartments. Later she was moved to another place and given heavy labor: she cleared snow from the streets for ten to twelve hours a day. Even more difficult was a job at a wood warehouse, where, for ten to twelve hours a day, she dragged logs and loaded wood onto a truck. Elsewhere she worked in a large laundry, where her job was drying clothes. The drying ovens were so hot that "I remember clearly the sensation of true asphyxiation—these were regular gas chambers." Her workmate, a hunchbacked criminal named Vanya, saved her. "Several times a day, for ten minutes at a time, he would shut me in the closet where they stored the dry, clean linen. On this linen I would rest from my 'gas chambers.' "

In these years in Siberia, Nadezhda's classification changed. First, she was a prisoner at Kolyma, but when she was liberated she became a "free exile." This meant that she had to remain in the region without a set term, but she could look for a job. She was employed as an economist in the planning department of a railway line. This department contained only a senior planning engineer and herself. Since the railroad was militarized and her superior was a major, she had to say, "Comrade major, request permission to speak" in order to talk with him.

Always Nadezhda was haunted by the separation from her children. One day she was permitted to visit the children's home in which her third child was kept. "At first she didn't recognize me, but then she hugged me and cried so when I left." Her grandmother cared for two other children. She describes how she met her oldest daughter, now in a school, whom she had not seen for ten years:

> They told me that she had gone out somewhere and probably would be back soon. I sat on a bench near the dormitory and wanted to wait, but my heart was pounding so that I couldn't sit still. I slowly walked along the street. All around there were people. Some walked past me, some were coming my way. One girl in a white beret was heading in my direction. She looked at me indifferently and walked by. I called out to her, "Natasha." She didn't resemble at all that six-year-old girl whom I had left ten years ago, but I knew precisely that this was she. She turned around, looked at me in surprise and asked, "Excuse me, have we met somewhere before?"

Nadezhda is the main character in this book, but she tells of other prisoners and exiles who crossed her path and whom she cannot forget. Sonya was a Byelorussian who came from a village near the Polish border. Her mother lived in a village a few miles away on the Polish side of the border. "When her mother fell ill, Sonya went to her place to milk the cow. She got six years PSh [suspicion of espionage]." Sonya figures in one of the many agonizing incidents in the book. Two men came into the women's barracks at Kolyma. They asked for a recent arrival, whom Sonya pointed out to them. The woman was sitting on her bed with a 6-month-old child in her arms. One of the men played with the boy and took him from her. Suddenly, his attitude

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changed, and he shoved the child to Sonya. "Follow me," he ordered the woman, whose name Nadezhda never learned. "How she screamed! They dragged her to the door, but she tore away from their arms and reached for her child, screaming all the while. The two of them dragged her out of the barracks, and her cries could still be heard beyond the door. And in the arms of the distraught Sonya the little boy was wailing in a heartrending way." A group of wives had received ten-year sentences, of whom many were later released. But two of them were forced to serve out the entire ten years. Nadezhda reflects: "As with everything else taking place, there was neither rhyme nor reason to it all."

Kogan was considered to be the most vicious investigator in the Rostov prison. Nadezhda was once summoned to be interrogated by him. Drunk, he yelled at her, "Get up, I'm talking to you!" and pulled out his revolver. As she walked down a corridor, he followed, brandishing his revolver. Finally, he told a guard to take her to her cell. "No matter how many years have passed, no, not even years, but decades, to this day I cannot walk alone along an empty street if someone is walking behind me. I feel that he will suddenly shoot me in the back of the head. I always stop and let the person go by me."

There were also intervals of satisfaction. One camp had amateur theatricals, and Nadezhda was known to be a fine reader of poetry. She soon became "the 'prima donna' of the agit-brigade there." On other occasions she took part in amateur theatricals and performed in operettas. These temporary activities gave her something to do beyond the ordinary life of an exile.

The reader of Nadezhda's book lives with her for all of the twenty years that she spent as a prisoner and exile. In 1956, she was "rehabilitated." Eighteen years after her first husband, Pavel, had been shot, she received his rehabilitation paper. Yet such was her attachment to the Communist idea that she asked the party control commission to restore his membership in the party. "I wrote that it no longer made any difference to him, but 'his children remain, and I want the children to know that their father lived as a Communist and died as a Communist'." Pavel was reinstated posthumously.

Nadezhda went to work in a bank, the same one she had been working in when she was arrested in 1936. One task remained—her father's grave. When she went to the cemetery, she couldn't find it. Immediately after the funeral, she remembered, students who had attended her father's lectures had planted a small tree at the head of his grave. Now a large tree with overhanging branches rose over a free plot of earth. With the help of the cemetery's overseer, she obtained permission to restore the grave. Here again, an old habit prevailed. When they agreed on what to tell the director of the office in charge of the cemetery, the overseer stretched out his hand and said, "A Communist's word?" Nadezhda remarks: "Once, in the days of my youth, this was the most sacred thing for me—'a Communist's word.' Since then I had lived for so many years among 'enemies of the people.' And here I was once again hearing 'a Communist's word'."

In view of the present controversy stirred by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's claim that the German people as a whole supported Hitler's Holocaust, the question that Nadezhda asks about the Russian terror is very pertinent:

> To this day, I cannot understand: Where did they find such a large number of executioners? For, after all, similar interrogations, involving torture, were going on everywhere, "from Moscow to the furthest reaches." Moreover, these methods were cultivated (if such a word can be used) and mechanized; special torture chambers were built.
>
> I have met people who went through both Hitler's interrogations and ours. They stated that there must have been an exchange of experience, for the methods were very similar. Everywhere people were found who used these methods. Where were they from? And in such great numbers? I would have understood if these cadres had been taken from among "legal" criminals. Those I have seen and they are truly animals. They could calmly kill a person or they could lose someone's eye in a card game and then knock it out to pay off their debts.
>
> Among the torturers and executioners, there may have been some former criminals, but, for the most part, no, they were drawn from other sources. From where?

Nadezhda wrote *Back in Time* in 1971-1972, sixteen years after her return to Moscow. At that time, as she says, "the euphoria from the 'Khrushchev thaw' had still not fully subsided, when we still heard such words as socialism, the revolution, the party." Her book is written simply; I found it supremely moving. The three volumes of *The Gulag Archipelago* deal with the entire phenomenon of the camps on a grand scale. Nadezhda Joffe's book tells one prisoner's story in the most intimate detail. The two works deserve to be put side by side in any collection on the worst nightmare of Soviet history.

But there is more to the story. When I learned that Nadezhda Joffe was still alive and living in Brooklyn, about a two-hour drive from where I live, I decided that I had to see her, to get the rest of her tale. And my interest went beyond Nadezhda. What was the history of such a book? How did an American get to know about it and to translate it? Why has it been published by a small, obscure house in Michigan? What has been its reception in America? I got in touch with her translator, Frederick S. Choate, who lives in Berkeley, California, and he agreed to come to New York to accompany me. We visited her in the early afternoon of May 20, the day after she celebrated her ninetieth birthday.

Nadezhda turned out to be a surprisingly vigorous old lady. She is small, white-haired, rather delicate. She knows no English and speaks only Russian. She lives in the Coney Island area of Brooklyn, with a daughter and her husband, who had come to the United States fifteen years ago. Now three of her four daughters and two grandchildren live in the States, which is why she decided to join them in 1991. The family lives in an apartment of four small, cluttered rooms over a tire store in a drab neighborhood. Though she has still seen little of the country, Nadezhda said that she has been most impressed by the opportunities for advancement in this country.

In Moscow, Nadezhda devoted herself to two organizations that have taken up the cause of the "returnees." One is "Memorial," a social-historical society that collects data throughout the Soviet Union on the repression of the Stalin period; the other is "Return," which has a publishing program of books by former prisoners. After Nadezhda took two years to write her manuscript for "Return," it was published in Moscow in an edition of 15,000, paid for by a grandson who had become a prosperous businessman.

The book was picked up by Choate, an American researcher in Moscow, who was interested in the work of a Russian literary critic, Alexander Voronsky, who was shot in 1937. Choate, who had taught at the University of California at Davis, was spending four years in Moscow, and he recognized the value of Nadezhda's book. He found the manuscript on the shelves of the "Return" library. He also discovered that the Russian edition had omitted passages dealing with Nadezhda's Jewishness and Trotskyism.

Back in the United States in 1993, Choate obtained Nadezhda's permission to translate her book into English, with the missing passages restored. As a result, the English edition is more faithful

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to the original than the Russian. Choate took his translation to a small publishing house, Labor Publications, in Oak Park, Michigan, because it is sympathetic to the Trotskyist cause. Only 3,000 copies were published, and so far this is the only review that this remarkable book has received. In this tortuous way, a book which deserves a much larger readership and much more attention has appeared in the United States. It remains to be seen whether it will be permitted to die of neglect.

Nadezhda is not finished. She is now working on a memoir of her father, who has been dealt with inadequately in the existing literature on the Russian revolution. Isaac Deutscher mentions him only briefly in his three volumes on the life of Trotsky. Other writers have not done much more. A young Russian historian is gathering material for her in Moscow, and another in New York. So we have not heard the last from Nadezhda Joffe.

THEODORE DRAPER is the author most recently of *A Struggle for Power: The American Revolution* (Times Books).

The Book of Unmonastic Life

BY MICHAEL ANDRÉ BERNSTEIN

Uncollected Poems
by Rainer Maria Rilke
selected and translated by Edward Snow
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 266 pp., $22)

Life of a Poet: Rainer Maria Rilke
by Ralph Freedman
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 638 pp., $35)

I.

An incessant self-mythologizing and an unmistakable authenticity collided in Rilke's writing virtually from the beginning. For years, hand-me-down poses and a derivative rhetoric contended with an utterly new lyric voice and purpose, the two almost embarrassingly audible at every level of the verse. In 1899, for example, at the end of an early cycle of linked poems, *The Book of Monastic Life*, Rilke adopts the voice of a simple monk who has seen a figure of power, angel or divinity, enter his cell:

> I see him sitting and musing,
> not beyond me;
> for him, everything is within—
> heaven and heath and house.

What is startling about these lines is how thoroughly they already express the grounding premise of his mature poetics. The conviction that the entire natural world can exist in the inner consciousness of a higher being is one from which Rilke would never swerve; but at this stage the gap between his technique and the poem's thematic claims appears almost unbridgeable. Even if the heavy, full rhymes, straight-forward rhythm, vague diction and over-insistent repetitions of sound units can be justified as appropriate to the persona of this particular speaker, they are all thoroughly commonplace devices; and they recur throughout the early volumes, irrespective of the poem's specific occasion or theme.

For this reason, the standard accounts of Rilke's career place great emphasis upon a supposedly fundamental change in his writing that occurred after he moved to Paris in 1902 and began working as Rodin's secretary. But one of the real mysteries of Rilke's genius, I think, is how many of his early poetry's most pedestrian characteristics go on, in a remarkably short time, to provide the foundation for a series of major works. Though the resonance of images such as "heaven, heath and house" is drearily formulaic in *The Book of Monastic Life*, these same words, when they reappear in so many of the great poems of subsequent decades, always do so in their original role: as icons of a fully internalized universe. As late as the Ninth *Duino Elegy*, completed in 1922, Rilke will declare:

> ... Perhaps we are *here* in order to say:
> house,
> bridge, fountain, gate, pitcher, fruit-tree,
> window —
> at most: column, tower ...

None of Rilke's readers has been more sensitive to the continuity in his art than Robert Musil. In his "Address at the Memorial Service for Rilke in Berlin" (an address he delivered in 1927 on behalf of the city's leading writers, over the vehement objections of Bertolt Brecht), Musil remarked upon the continuous enlargement of Rilke's formal resources and the singleness of vision connecting each of the poet's different phases: "At times one might say that the young Rilke was imitating Rilke." For Musil, who usually viewed his contemporaries with acerbic distaste, Rilke was simply "the greatest lyric poet the Germans have seen since the Middle Ages." That judgment has been so widely accepted now that it is hard to remember it was once a matter of intense controversy.

Rilke, along with Frost and Yeats, is among the very few major twentieth-century poets whose eminence in the eyes of other writers has been matched by a widespread and enduring popularity. As Ralph Freedman's richly detailed biography tells us, at the time of Rilke's death on December 29, 1926, *The Book of Hours*, which appeared in 1905, had already sold nearly 59,000 copies; and, what is more telling, neither his critical nor his popular appeal has diminished in the seventy years since then. While the work of most of his contemporaries has been subject to recurring cycles of reappraisal, Rilke has become identified with the nature of poetry itself, his lines so deeply embedded in the common memory that they almost serve a similar collective function as the great anonymous compositions of oral cultures. Its very intimacy and air of radical solitude, its lack of overt solicitation to human dialogue, has made of Rilke's poetry a new kind of tale of the tribe, one that marshals its readers' deepest identification not by engaging public issues but by seeming to voice their own most inward concerns.

That this same inwardness is not without a strong component of self-pity is no doubt part of its abiding appeal. Who has not wanted to hear his own loneliness and melancholy given memorable form? There is no more perfect example of this than the end of the poem "Autumn Day," from 1902. Probably none of Rilke's stanzas has been quoted as often or identified with more directly:

> Whoever has no house now, will never have
> one.
> Whoever is alone now will stay alone,
> will sit, read, write long letters through the
> evening,
> and wander on the boulevards, up and
> down,
> restlessly, while the dry leaves are blowing.

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(Unless otherwise noted, I cite Stephen Mitchell's translations, but it is striking how much he loses here by sacrificing the strictness of Rilke's rhymes and parallelism.)

In the three years separating "Autumn Day" from *The Book of Monastic Life*, Rilke's craftsmanship increased immeasurably, but his new mastery is not signaled by any kind of wholesale discarding of an initial repertoire, or a stylistic self-alteration of the sort that poets such as Pound imposed on themselves. Instead, it is effected by the slightest of modulations: the rhymes stay as sonorous as before, but in place of the earlier, predictable a-b-a-b quatrains governing much of his first books, Rilke's shift to a final five-line stanza, after two earlier ones of first three and then four lines each, permits an imbalanced a-b-b-a-b sequence to orchestrate the poem's closure. Since our ears and eyes register the asymmetry in the rhyme scheme as well as in the stanza lengths, this blending of formal completion and unresolved disparities in the poem's structure is crucial in creating a mood that unites restlessness and resignation.

With his fondness for full rhymes and uncomplicated syntax, Rilke is often easily memorizable, and since much of the best-known modern poetry is not, we have tended to underestimate how potent a resource this can be. The sense of almost instantaneous and unmediated intimacy that readers frequently feel with Rilke owes a great deal to the speed with which they can hear his lines in their own minds. In this sense, their response exactly duplicates the transformation of everything outside oneself into part of one's own inner being—that, Rilke believed, was the poet's chief task. But there is also something immensely flattering to the reader in having internalized a great poet's lines, since it turns the writer's words, as well as his sentiments and sensibility, into the reader's own.

Knowing a poem "by heart" can make it feel almost like a joint creation whose words have arisen out of one's innermost depths. Encountering one of Rilke's texts can feel less like reading an independent work of art than like suddenly receiving the gift of a magically exteriorized and heightened autobiography. Since they give one so powerful a sense of being able to overhear one's own innermost musings, Rilke's writings have inspired a degree of devotion in which it is not always easy to distinguish the reverence for the artist from the reader's self-love.

For the generations of German readers raised on the intensities of Romantic poets such as Novalis and Hölderlin, the thrill of participating in a poet's sacerdotal mission was overwhelmingly seductive. If Rilke's "inwardness" was the infallible sign of his fitness for that role, a reader's "inward" responsiveness was correspondingly laudable. From the turn of the century until today, being able to recite poems such as "Autumn Day," or "Archaic Torso of Apollo," with its luminous ending—"You must change your life"—has offered a kind of spiritual patent of nobility, certifying the sensitivity of one's soul. The word *Inningkeit*, or "inwardness," has always carried strong religious and aesthetic connotations, in English and in German, and its uses have ranged from John Wycliffe's fourteenth-century translation of Luke 1:78 ("By the inwardness of the merci of oure God") to Beethoven's markings in several of his late piano sonatas (as in "*Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung*" in opus 109).

In Rilke, however, the long history of this term acquires its most radical meaning: "inwardness" comes to signify fulfilling the earth's deepest dreams by internalizing the totality of creation:

> Earth, isn't this what you want: to arise within us, *invisible*? ...
> What, if not transformation, is your urgent command?

This transformation is also, as Rilke explains in letter after letter, his sole purpose in existing: "This world, regarded no longer from the human point of view, but as it is within the angel, is perhaps my real task." It is worth lingering over these words, so as to emphasize how intransigently Rilke insists that his life only has significance once it has been entirely dedicated to a transcendent mission. By comparison, all the other difficult "tasks" of existence, including the responsibilities of a father, a lover or a friend, are nothing but meaningless lures that distract the poet from his obligation to his art. Inwardness, which was originally cherished as the essential measure of our common humanity, demands nothing less than a leap beyond the human into an altogether different order of being.

II.

Not surprisingly, the facility with which the Germans have appropriated, and often misused, so pliant and highly charged a concept as "inwardness" has elicited strong counter-reactions. In these pages, Richard Wolin recently drew attention to Hannah Arendt's ferocious attack on the whole culture of inwardness in her study of Rahel Varnhagen. For Arendt, the romantic cultivation of inwardness is deeply and necessarily linked to self-deception and a crippling misjudgment about the nature of the external world. As Arendt writes,

> if thinking rebounds back upon itself and finds its solitary object within the soul—if, that is, it becomes introspection—it distinctly produces ... a semblance of unlimited power by the very act of isolation from the world.... In the isolation achieved by introspection thinking becomes limitless because it is no longer molested by anything exterior ... there is no longer any demand for action.... Reality can offer nothing new; introspection has already anticipated everything.... Thus the power and the autonomy of the soul are secured.

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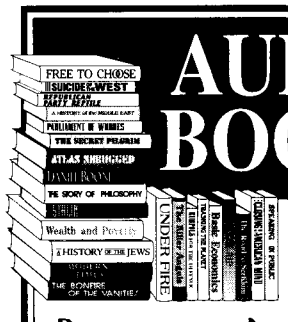

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Secured at the price of truth, it must be recognized, for without reality shared with other human beings, truth loses all meaning. Introspection and its hybrids engender *mendacity*.

But if Rilke's life partially justifies Arendt's accusations, it also suggests that she was wrong to assume that a sufficient solution to romantic introspection lies either in "a reality shared with other human beings" or in "thinking" that leads directly to "action." As German history and German high culture have demonstrated, there is no shortage of people eager to validate the most extreme, introspective fantasies of a self-proclaimed seer by translating them into deeds. In politics or in art, a genius can offer his acolytes the inestimable privilege of participating in the spell of his inner nobility and soulfulness.

The seductive power of this role in Rilke's circle is unmistakable. Many of Rilke's most intense love affairs began with a letter from an unknown admirer proclaiming that Rilke's lines seemed to speak directly to her, like declarations of a lifelong mutual understanding, and there are moments when the fervor and the self-abnegation with which some of these correspondents addressed him is distinctly unsettling. Consider, for example, this characteristic declaration by one of these women, the concert pianist Magda von Hattinberg, whom Rilke renamed "Benvenuta," and who, for a few weeks in 1914, became one of the poet's most fervent lovers:

> My thoughts acquire purity in you, and no impure thought can exist since it cannot exist in you. The life of the mind for which I have been struggling all these unbearable years ... that infinite life of the mind, comes true for me in you.

Rilke's relationships with others are troubling because they often depend on precisely this mixture of near servility and unacknowledged self-congratulation, which is essential to the worship of a great artist. Since the artist's insights are supposedly far beyond the understanding of the vulgar mob, the deeper one is moved by them the greater the confirmation of one's own inwardness. Inwardness, so the myth insists, can be understood only by an equivalent inwardness, and to captivate potential lovers and patrons Rilke played upon this belief with all the virtuosity at his command.

There is abundant evidence of Rilke's success in finding an ardent and uninterrupted succession of adherents—or in permitting them to find him; and since most of them eventually wrote memoirs about their connection with him, we are more than sufficiently informed today about the vicissitudes of Rilke's erotic history. From important lovers such as Lou Andreas-Salomé, Magda von Hattinberg, Loulou Albert-Lasard and Baladine Klossowska ("Merline"), to his great patron Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, and from Katharina Kippenberg, the wife of Rilke's publisher at the Insel-Verlag, down to his most casual acquaintances, it sometimes seems as if everyone whose path ever crossed Rilke's has composed an account of the event and published whatever letters were exchanged.

There were two notable exceptions to this ritual. One was the sculptor Clara Westhoff (1878-1954), whom Rilke married in 1901 and left shortly thereafter, in order, according to him, to allow them both the freedom to grow as artists. The other was their daughter Ruth, born seven and a half months after her parents' wedding. Ruth rarely ever saw her father (he did not bother to attend her wedding to Carl Sieber in 1922), but until her suicide in 1972 she dedicated her existence to publishing her father's writings and enshrining his memory. Although the bulk of Rilke's letters to Clara and Ruth appear in the published correspondence, neither woman ever produced the kinds of explanatory, self-serving accounts of the poet's character that mark so many of the other memoirs. It is as though they had learned, better than anyone else, the futility of such explanations.

RAINER MARIA RILKE BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The ready availability of so much intimate biographical material has had the ironic effect of subjecting Rilke, at least posthumously, to the kind of intrusive public scrutiny he sought to avoid in his lifetime. Nothing mattered so much to him as preserving his privacy and his independence. To do so, he was prepared to break off his most important relationships, not only with women whom he had assiduously courted and whose support he still craved, but also with revered artistic mentors such as Rodin. Yet one of the defining paradoxes of Rilke's legacy is that this poet who deliberately sacrificed himself and those around him to the creation of a monumental, autonomous body of work is now regularly discussed in terms of his most intimate, personal traits.

Rilke's notorious skittishness as a lover has become a central issue in virtually every account of his writing. In this case, moreover, our inquisitiveness is, for once, not part of the contemporary reduction of a great artist to a set of more-or-less pathological symptoms and politically suspect attitudes. Instead, it is Rilke himself who has made such speculations almost irresistible, by adopting the rhetoric of a spiritual pilgrim who, through his own painful experiences, has come to understand the true nature

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of love and who, in turn, can teach it to his readers.

Rilke's poems contain an astonishing number of imperatives and exhortations. There are no less than seven imperatives in the final "Sonnet to Orpheus"; and constructions such as "Look...," "See...," and "Consider..." are far more common in Rilke than in any of his most notable contemporaries. For a lyric poet of such extraordinary delicacy and indirection, Rilke is also a highly didactic writer. Indeed, his popularity is in part based on his presumed wisdom as a guide to living more authentically. The impulse to probe the links between the life and the teaching is, in a sense, directly encouraged by Rilke's poetry itself.

In the magnificent elegy written in 1908 after the death of his friend, the painter Paula Modersohn-Becker, Rilke declares:

> We need, in love, to practice only this:
> letting each other go. For holding on
> comes easily; we do not need to learn it.

Robert Hass, in his introduction to Stephen Mitchell's translations, wryly speculates that Rilke is here "teaching his readers something they probably need to know more than he does." Louise Glück's reaction is simpler and more astringent: she accuses Rilke of "bad faith" in dispensing such advice at all, since "what was hard for *him* was holding on." But this contradiction cannot simply be explained away as a matter of personal bad faith. The dictum that "to love means to be alone" is so utterly central to Rilke's sense of human existence that he enunciates it at every stage of his career. The early and often preposterously pontifical *Letters to a Young Poet* is already full of phrases such as "loving, for a long time ahead and far into life, is solitude, a heightened and deepened kind of aloneness." A few years later, in 1910, Rilke sharply condensed these words for his great novel, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*: "nothing can be meant by union save increased loneliness." And the same insistent note is sounded at the very center of the *Duino Elegies*, from the "First Elegy"'s praise for those whose unrequited love frees them from the paltriness of sexual and emotional possessiveness, to the "Fourth Elegy"'s bleak question:

> ... Aren't lovers
> Always arriving at each other's boundaries?
> although they promised vastness, hunting,
> home.

Finally, in a breathtakingly tender admonition, the *Sonnets to Orpheus* enjoin the renunciation of eros, of life itself, until letting go is understood as the proper response to everything that constrains us to one desire, one form of being:

> Be ahead of all parting, as though it already
> were
> behind you, like the winter that has just
> gone by.

Rilke was always prepared to use these arguments defensively in order to extract himself from any relationship that had grown too demanding, and in this sense Glück's charge of "bad faith" is amply warranted. But to conceive something like a plenitude of renunciation, and then to make that plenitude the core of his writing, did not come as readily or painlessly to Rilke as we often assume. The loneliness was as real as the flight from intimacy, and the fear of physical suffering as great as the constant injunction to see life and death as a single, unbroken continuum.

Rilke was regularly terrified of his own isolation, and he knew that the loneliness that he chose left him exposed to all the turbulence of his emotions without anyone to alleviate or to redirect them. That turbulence was also, of course, the all-important reward of breaking free of the sheltering intimacies of his affairs. But Rilke's writing makes clear that by withdrawing from the solicitude that his lovers offered, he was turning away from something that a part of him deeply craved. If he was often callously evasive, and even exploitative, in his treatment of others, no one knew this better than he himself. His texts are full of harsh self-criticisms probing the gap between his spiritual breakthroughs and the weakness of his own character.

III.

The evidence of his voluminous correspondence and the extensive accounts of those who knew him, alongside the almost hierophantic claims implicit in his own moralizing exhortations, make the question of ethical judgment particularly difficult to avoid in Rilke's case. But they also greatly complicate the role of a literary biographer. With so much material readily available, it is hard to justify the need for another full-scale biography, and this is especially true because the basic outline of Rilke's life has already been told so many times—not least effectively by Rilke himself, in numerous well-known letters and stories. In German, virtually every phase of this poet's existence now has its own monographic literature, and there are detailed studies, scholarly and anecdotal, to provide interested readers with almost week-by-week accounts of Rilke's activities, contacts and reflections.

Even in English, at least three notable biographies have appeared within the past twelve years, and no new archival material of any significance has come to light in the interval since these studies came out. Thus, Ralph Freedman's *Life of a Poet: Rainer Maria Rilke*, although it is considerably longer than any of its predecessors, can add little to the already well-known facts. What Freedman's book does do, and more thoroughly than any of the other biographies, is to retell Rilke's story meticulously and with a welcome attention to the circumambient social and political circumstances.

Thus, Freedman's description of Rilke's experiences in post World War I Munich, where for a brief time this instinctively conservative writer found himself consorting with extreme radicals and facing the risk of arrest or assassination by right-wing nationalist counter-revolutionaries, is exemplary in unraveling the complexities of Rilke's position amid the chaotic forces around him. Freedman's copious notes are also a model of clarity and usefulness, suggesting important further readings and demonstrating a commendable fair-mindedness in acknowledging prior studies. And yet at the end of this exhaustive study it is hard not to think longingly of Auden's famous line, "A shilling life will give you all the facts."

Rilke's life was so entirely focused on his writing that the facts really can be summarized adequately in a few pages. Indeed, the events of his life have come to form the indispensable framework for an elaborately scripted legend. From his birth in Prague on December 4, 1875, to middle-class parents who were utterly ill-suited to one another and soon separated, to his death in Switzerland fifty-one years later of an excruciatingly painful form of leukemia, every important event in Rilke's life has been retrospectively endowed with the aura of a destiny.

His more devoted readers can enumerate the handful of emblematic incidents with the same intensity that they bring to their recitation of "Autumn Day," and in all such accounts certain details are regarded as decisive. At birth, he was given the sexually ambiguous name René Maria, and his mother kept him in girl's clothes until he was 7. (Not until he had turned 22 did Lou Andreas-Salomé persuade him to adopt the more Germanically masculine "Rainer.") In 1886, however, his mother's unwelcome cosseting was replaced by the harshness of military

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boarding schools, including a period in Mährisch-Weißkirchen, the same academy that Musil had so loathed a few years earlier and used as the setting for his first novel, *Young Törless*. Almost immediately after he was expelled from Mährisch-Weißkirchen in 1891, Rilke began to devote himself with increasing tenacity to becoming a great poet. From then on, everything was subordinated to that task.

In a sense, his real biography consists of only three significant categories: first, and most important, the list of books he published, beginning in 1894 with the painfully immature *Life and Songs* and ending in 1926, six months before his death, with *Vergers, suivi des Quatrains Valaisans*, a collection of poems written in French; second, the women he loved, and the few men with whom he established a lasting connection; and third, the many places he visited or lived in, especially including the north German artist colony of Worpswede, where he met Clara Westhoff and Paula Becker, the two trips to Russia with Lou Andreas-Salomé, the decisive, prolonged residence in Paris, the retreat to the castle at Duino, near Trieste, where he began his major composition, the *Duino Elegies*, in 1912, and his stay in Muzot, Switzerland, where, in 1923, he finally completed the *Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*.

This catalog of dates, names and places may seem uninspiring as the material of myth, but in Rilke's case each detail has been burnished and refined to fit perfectly into the master-narrative of his life as a painful and ultimately triumphant quest. Like a fairy tale or a folk legend, this quest, too, has been endowed with its own elegantly simple and comprehensive unities. There are four distinct stages, each punctuated by a dramatic upheaval. The first phase, from 1875 to 1902, might be called "The Apprentice Years." It covers Rilke from his childhood until the move to Paris, and it includes not only the important first encounter with Lou Andreas-Salomé, but also his marriage to Clara Westhoff and the beginning of a real, if still limited, reputation as a poet. The second phase might be dubbed "From Discipleship to Mastery" and extends until 1912, and was triggered by Rilke's acute dissatisfaction with his early writing, his search for a way to radically transform his poetics and his flight from the constraints of fatherhood and domesticity. The turbulent apprenticeship to Rodin, the establishing of lifelong bonds with his principal patrons, and several of his most significant love affairs took place during these years.

But most importantly, these were the years that Rilke published a series of major works, including such masterpieces as the two parts of *New Poems*, the "Requiem for a Woman Friend," and his novel *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. By 1910, Rilke's fame as one of the preeminent German poets of the age was secure. But then, early in 1912, during an extended stay at Duino Castle, the indispensable central event of the whole legend occurred. It is worth quoting extensively from Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe's account of that defining moment, since her version, in all its romantic grandiloquence, has assumed canonical status in the Rilke myth:

> Then, one morning, he received a troublesome business letter. He wanted to take care of it quickly.... Outside, a violent north wind was blowing, but the sun shone and the water gleamed as if covered with silver. Rilke climbed down to the bastions which ... were connected to the foot of the castle by a narrow path along the cliffs, which abruptly drop off, for about two hundred feet, into the sea. Rilke walked back and forth, completely absorbed in the problem of how to answer the letter. Then, all at once, in the midst of his thoughts, he stopped; it seemed that from the raging storm a voice had called to him, "Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels' hierarchies?" ... Taking out the notebook that he always carried with him, he wrote down these words, together with a few lines that formed by themselves without his intervention. He knew that the god had spoken. Very calmly he climbed back up to his room, set his notebook aside, and answered the difficult letter. By the evening the whole First Elegy had been written.

During the succeeding days Rilke went on to write the Second, much of the Third, and scattered lines of what later became the Sixth, Ninth and Tenth *Elegies*, before the inspiration stopped as quickly as it had seized him. Longing for the return of that revelation, and for the "gift" of being able to complete the Elegies, is what fills the next decade, 1912-1922: "The Crisis Years." This was a time when Rilke regularly described himself as doing nothing except "standing around as a beginner, though as a beginner who can't begin." The cataclysm of World War I, Rilke's successful effort to avoid front-line service in the Imperial Hapsburg army, the post-war confusion of Munich and the move to Switzerland in 1919 are all secondary to the poet's restlessness and depression as he waited for another "Duino experience."

The final phase, 1921-1926, is always figured as "The Culmination" of the poet's life and work, and began when Rilke took up residence in the small château of Muzot. There, in February 1922, during two weeks of unmatched productivity and inspiration, he completed not only the *Duino Elegies*, but also all fifty-five *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Thereafter, even though he kept on composing new works, including a series of translations of Valéry, Rilke's mission was essentially at an end. Combined with what he had already written, this astonishing late output made him indisputably the greatest German poet since Hölderlin. His pain-racked death in 1926 was not so much the cutting-off of a career but a kind of belated crossing-over into another order of being.

Or so, at least, the legend would have it. And for all its heavy-handed, monolithic emplotment, this is the model to which all the major biographies, including Freedman's, more or less adhere. Yet Freedman himself provides sufficient evidence to complicate the story considerably. In particular, he offers fascinating proof of how conscientiously Rilke managed his career, how careful he was to mail fulsomely inscribed copies of his early publications to the major writers of the day, including such unlikely figures as Theodor Fontane. Freedman further shows that as Rilke's fame increased, "he reserved relatively few [copies of new books] for old friends in Prague," preferring to cultivate "new contacts" in Munich and the wider German literary world. Rilke's careerism and his artful courting of a series of increasingly prominent patrons are not in the least disreputable, but they sit uneasily with his reputation for unworldly inwardness.

Far more tellingly, there is a great deal that is inherently false about the whole schema according to which his life is narrated. The terms in which Rilke chose to make sense of his existence are often in conflict with his actual accomplishments, and it is surprising how long and uncritically those terms have been adopted by his interpreters. Instead of passively enduring the long fallow periods that represent the melancholic corollaries to his bursts of visionary realizations, Rilke actually composed constantly, and often at the highest level, during the years in which he was supposedly doing little except waiting for another revelation from the "Angel of Duino." Edward Snow's introduction to his fine translation of Rilke's *Uncollected Poems* makes this point particularly well, and he rightly blames the relative obscurity of these texts on "the ever-present myth of Rilke's *Duino* crisis, and that myth's way of obscuring whatever might contradict it or undermine its drama."

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Rilke was the first and most important creator of his own legend, and after 1912 he was committed to seeing his life's "true task" as the completion of the *Duino Elegies*. All else was merely secondary, more like finger-exercises than real creation. Hence Snow's decision to gather into a single book the strongest of the poems Rilke composed between 1909 and 1926 but never included in any of his books is itself an important critical act. The enormous prestige of the standard, six-volume German edition of Rilke's *Collected Writings* has always worked to validate the conventional view of the poet's career, and Snow is right to insist that its canonical division of Rilke's texts into separate sections labeled "completed works" (*Vollendetes*), "dedications" (*Widmungen*) and "drafts" (*Entwürfe*), "makes it impossible to experience the poems in their temporal succession and imposes on them the very distinctions they so curiously blur."

Snow's chronological arrangement brings together poems that the German edition keeps far apart, and enables us to see the range and the uninterrupted fluency of Rilke's productivity. Alongside such major achievements as "The Spanish Trilogy," "The Raising of Lazarus" and "The Spirit Ariel," all written within days of one another early in 1913—supposedly one of Rilke's "sterile" periods—there are brief lyrics of such quiet, yearning tenderness that it becomes impossible to read them and still believe that "letting go" of love always came so easily to him:

> For I don't *think back*; all that I *am*
> stirs me because of you. I don't invent you
> at sadly cooled-off places from which
> you've gone away; even your not being
> there
> is warm with you and more real and more
> than a privation. . . .

Well after the completion of the *Duino Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Rilke kept composing wonderfully fresh poems whose clarities are closer to the best of the *Book of Images* (1906) than to the two great volumes that are usually allowed to define his final years. A poem such as "Early Spring," written in February 1924, marvelously combines the rhythmic subtleties and unexpected shifts of imagery of the *Elegies* and *Sonnets* with the intense absorption in a simple landscape of Rilke's Worpswede period:

> Harshness disappeared. Suddenly caring
> spreads itself
> on the field's uncovered gray.
> Small rivulets change their intonations.
> Tendernesses, inexpertly,
> reach toward the earth from space.
> Roads run far into the land, foretelling it.
> Unexpectedly you see its rising's
> visage in the empty tree.

For all the indisputable gains that he made over the years in technique, there is far more continuity between the early and the late poems than most of his readers, or perhaps even Rilke himself, recognized. And I suspect it is because he has already translated *The Book of Images*, as well as the two volumes of Rilke's 1907 and 1908 *New Poems*, that Snow is particularly adept at capturing what one might call the non-Orphic side of Rilke's voice. Even in the most complex and rhetorically charged pieces, however, Snow is careful never to simplify Rilke or to elide the moments of deeply unsettling strangeness in his writing. Most important of all, these translations, along with the evidence of critical biographies such as Freedman's, should finally let us get beyond the simplifications of the Rilke legend with its cycles of transcendent inspiration and imaginative paralysis. By now, such a demystification is an essential first step toward a more genuinely responsive—and responsible—reading of the poetry itself.

IV.

In her journal entry of October 5, 1913, Lou Andreas-Salomé noted that poetry, for Rilke, was "all a release into himself and not a form of communication." As usual, she is Rilke's shrewdest observer. Yet paradoxically, that uncommunicative "release into himself" has communicated more intensely to readers than the words of any other modern German poet. Even in English, which is notoriously inimical to many of Rilke's resources, a surprising amount of his power comes through. He can give abstract substantives such as "Being" or "Fate" all the solidity of concrete, tangible objects, and make them seem as palpable as William Carlos Williams's red wheelbarrow and white chickens.

The densely compacted word-formations and the neologisms that are possible in German, and for which Rilke, along with Paul Célan, had an unparalleled gift, are part of what make a line such as this from the *Sonnets to Orpheus*—"*Sei—und wisse zugleich des Nicht-Seins Bedingung*"—(literally, "Be—and know at the same time Not-Being's Requirement")—absolutely typical of Rilke and utterly resistant to translation. Neither Stephen Mitchell's California-Zen rendering, "Be—and yet know the great void where all things begin," nor C.F. MacIntyre's impossibly abstruse version, "Be—at the same time, know the terms of negation," succeeds in making Rilke's line remotely persuasive as English verse. Yet the sonnet as a whole, with its haunting initial imperative, "Be ahead of all parting," survives its inevitable denaturing to remain one of the most cherished texts of the whole cycle.

Rilke's inwardness moves readers so powerfully, even when it reaches them in a language whose strengths are so alien to his own, because it speaks from a view of the self that confronts the most fundamental questions of life, desire and mortality, without drawing on any of the leveling tropes or dubious scientisms of traditional psychology. Rilke's inwardness is the absolute antithesis of any form of normative psychology, just as his ideas of love as an endless leave-taking defy every conventional notion of intimacy. Like Freud, Rilke used his own fears, illnesses and neuroses as the foundation for a theory of what it means to be fully "at home" in the world; but his sense of what that entailed was at once more inclusive and undogmatic than Freud's. Perhaps this is why Lou Andreas-Salomé, herself one of Freud's earliest disciples and the author of significant psychoanalytic writings, recommended against Rilke's ever going into analysis.

It is not the specific tenets of his personal metaphysics, but Rilke's whole language and tone, his basic way of framing questions, that implies an immensely suggestive alternative to any psychotherapeutic idea of the self. It begins, as any persuasive alternative must, with a deep respect for the ultimate impenetrability of the human heart:

> . . . we never know
> the actual, vital contour of our own
> emotions—just what forms them from
> outside.
> Who has not sat, afraid, before his heart's
> curtain? It rose: the scenery of farewell.

Rilke profoundly respected his own privacy. He was, in a manner already rare in his own day, decorous toward himself; and his style of decorousness did not require a sacrifice of strictness or lucidity. He thus offered his readers a way to find a correspondingly lucid decorum toward themselves.

The very idiosyncrasy of Rilke's language, with its haunting word-coinings and images, is a way of safeguarding the radical specificity of individual experience from any homogenizing discourse, psychological or political. Despite his occasionally vatic posturing, Rilke's poetry would never be as rich if it contained merely monuments to his own inwardness or a set of universalizing explana-

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tions on which yet another master-system could be erected. At its best, Rilke's verse shows us how to heed our own interior speech, and to heed it, surprisingly enough, without the overwrought intensities of psychoanalytic narratives.

What continues to resonate most deeply in Rilke's work is not just the unmixed high rhetoric of his "inspired" set-pieces, but rather a totally unexpected union of simplicity and transcendence expressed in a tone that shifts with complete naturalness from the prosaic to the cosmic:

> ... Like dew from the morning grass,
> what is ours floats into the air, like steam
> from a dish
> of hot food....
> ... Does the infinite space
> we dissolve into, taste of us then?

Time after time in his later writings, Rilke seems to come upon and to name his inwardness not like the expression of an already known and permanently assured possession, but like a sudden discovery, a gift accepted in a spirit that contains both gratitude and objectivity.

The real weakness of the early volumes was that their yearning often remained purely self-referential: affirmations of a desire that had no object beyond itself. Even the moments of despair had too much self-display. It is impossible to date the extraordinary change in Rilke with any precision, but its consequences are unmistakable. In a poem from 1913 he speaks of "*Innigstes unser*," "Innermost thing of ours," as that which "exceeds us," and acknowledges that, in order to know what is within, a person must reach a moment

> when the inner surrounds us
> as the most practiced distance, as the air's
> other side ...

Rilke's sense of what inwardness has come to mean to him can only articulate itself through this play of contradictory affirmations. His lines marshal a responsiveness that must be directed equally to what is wholly interior and what feels furthest away and most inhospitable. The internal and the external reflect and guarantee one another's existence, and their interdependence is precisely what grounds Rilke's mature poetics. One of Simone Weil's great aphorisms says that "the virtue of humility is nothing more nor less than the power of attention." Somehow, by teaching himself how to focus with such unwavering attentiveness on the world of external objects and created things, Rilke was able to find an uncannily fresh way of understanding and experiencing his own inner life. His subjectivity became the greatest prize of his objectivity. He came to say "I" the way he said "house, bridge, fountain...", and for the same numinous, unsentimental ends.

Listen, simply, to the way he can weave consolation out of the joining of personal sorrow to the rush of stellar spaces without denying the reality of either, or just turning one into only a metaphor of the other:

> Overflowing heavens of squandered stars
> flame brilliantly above your troubles.
> Instead
> of into your pillows, weep up toward them.
> There, at the already weeping, at the
> ending visage,
> slowly thinning out, ravishing
> worldspace begins. Who will interrupt,
> once you've forced your way there,
> the current? No one. You may panic,
> and fight that overwhelming course of stars
> that streams toward you. Breathe.
> Breathe the darkness of the earth and
> again
> look up! Again. Lightly and facelessly
> depths lean toward you from above. The
> serene
> countenance dissolved in night makes
> room for yours.

There have been fewer such transformations of our common terms of self-perception than our cultural histories like to pretend. And when Musil linked Rilke to the medieval poets, he must have meant that Rilke's poetry had been among the very few achievements of literature to have shown him authentic glimpses of a different, less possessive relationship to one's being, one's desires, one's world. Moreover, like the best medieval poets, Rilke often presents his visionary moments through the simplest, most domestic of images. The naïve metaphors from the realm of "heath and house" that once carried so little charge in *The Book of Monastic Life* do more than merely survive into the late poetry. The complexity of their new contexts transforms and enriches them immeasurably, and they, in turn, bring, even to the oracular insights of the *Duino Elegies*, the indispensable directness of the greatest art.

At the end, in another of the marvelous late poems written after the *Elegies*, Rilke returned to the question that he had asked since his earliest writings. Now he was able to answer it, with a naturalness of tone that took a lifetime's artistry to attain:

> What is inwardness?
> What if not sky intensified,
> flung through with birds and deep
> with winds of homecoming.
> ("Ah, not to be cut off")

MICHAEL ANDRÉ BERNSTEIN is the author most recently of *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (University of California Press).

The Call of the Wilder

BY STANLEY KAUFFMANN

Wilder Times: The Life of Billy Wilder by Kevin Lally

(Henry Holt, 496 pp., $30)

In Filmland's army of public personalities, the front rank is made up of actors, past and present. Then there is a second rank, smaller yet vivid: directors. Among those "public" directors, to speak only of Americans, are Cecil B. De Mille (the no-frills tycoon proving that down-to-earth businessmen could direct), John Ford (the taciturn saloon pal obliquely admitting to artistry) and John Huston (the loquacious, elegant, man-of-the-world artist). And there's Billy Wilder.

One of the assets of Kevin Lally's biography is that he appreciates Wilder as a public character. Lally is the managing editor of a magazine called *Film Journal International*, and his book has the tone of an extended magazine article, pleasant journeyman prose dispensing manifold facts. Extraordinary perception is not Lally's hallmark, but he does have enthusiasm and ease—and an eye for the Wilder persona. Lally is especially attentive to the formation of that persona as his book travels the long, long Wilder way. (June 22 is the director's ninetieth birthday.)

He was born Samuel Wilder to a Jewish family in Galicia, now a part of Poland that was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His mother, who had spent some time in America and

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had been memorably struck by a Buffalo Bill show there, called her son Billie. (Later he changed the spelling.) Thus, from the start, Wilder was in a sense cross-pollinated with a second culture. When he was 4, the family moved to Vienna—the father was a hotelier—and when he was 10 he watched the funeral procession of the Emperor Franz Josef, a fact that reminds us yet again how short and how long a century is.

At 18 Wilder left school and became a journalist, specializing in interviews. Vienna teemed with glittering people, politicians, artists and, in the cradle of that science, psychoanalysts. Alfred Adler spoke to him at length. Sigmund Freud showed him the door.

Before he was 20, Berlin called—the hub of Germanic culture. There he winkled out different jobs, including journalism again and some ballroom dancing for hire; and he soon entered the busy Berlin film world by a back door, ghostwriting for scenarists who were stuck for ideas. Then he and some other young men, Fred Zinnemann among them, scraped and hustled to make a film of their own, *People on Sunday* (1930). This friendly yet wry look at Berlin's Sunday diversions attracted attention—it's still worth seeing—and it lifted Wilder into the corps of professional screenwriters. Mostly he worked on comedies, and they brought him a sporty car, luxe quarters and attractive girlfriends. The adjectives could be redistributed.

Came Hitler. Went Wilder, the day after the Reichstag fire. The first stop was Paris—he knew French—where he cowrote and codirected a film, with the 17-year-old Danielle Darrieux in the cast. Through a friend who had preceded him to Hollywood, he was offered a writing contract with Columbia Pictures, although he had almost no English. Lally quotes him: "My dream all along was to get to Hollywood, which would have happened even without Hitler." In January, 1934, he sailed for America.

His initial screenplay proposal was turned down. "It did not work anyway," says Wilder, "even if it had been in perfect English." His job ended; hard times, really hard, arrived. In one of the more familiar Wilder stories, he shared a room in Hollywood with Peter Lorre, and they also shared a daily can of soup, while English was being learned. Then, through the friend who had brought him to Hollywood, Wilder was hired to collaborate on the script of a musical, *Music in the Air*. It starred an actress he would encounter again, Gloria Swanson. Fortune began to smile, then grinned. Jobs bubbled up; along with his increasingly patent gifts, he acquired a well-earned reputation as a furiously hard worker. To him, working on a script meant total immersion, day and most nights. Always he collaborated. He says he did it because he was weak in the new language, but he had almost always worked with collaborators in Europe. We can assume that to him film writing meant a dialogic process, even when dialogue wasn't being volleyed back and forth in verbal tennis. He liked to have a partner even when depressing stretches of silence were being weathered.

In 1938 he joined up with Charles Brackett, who was fourteen years older and markedly different in background. Brackett was a Harvard law graduate who had been a theater critic for *The New Yorker* and had written novels that brought him west. The odd couple fared fabulously. They wrote, among other films, two adaptations from European sources for the director who had long been Wilder's idol, the light-fingered Ernst Lubitsch, also out of Berlin, who had been brought to Hollywood in 1922 on a red carpet and was now monarch of the comic-romantic field. Their two jobs for Lubitsch, *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* and *Ninotchka*, sent the Wilder-Brackett stock soaring.

In 1942 Wilder was permitted to direct a Wilder-Brackett screenplay, *The Major and the Minor*. The story was built on a motif that became a Wilder fingerprint: masquerade. Ginger Rogers, for plot reasons, has to travel on a half-fare railroad ticket, posing as a 12-year-old. Male complications ensue. Owing to the film's saucy tenor, Wilder began to be seen as a persona—an adroit Continental, possibly a successor to Lubitsch himself.

Much of Wilder's subsequent career contradicted this boulevardier image. He often made dark, even grim pictures. (So had Lubitsch, especially in Germany.) Wilder's very next film was *Five Graves to Cairo*, about the North African campaign in World War Two, with Erich von Stroheim as General Rommel. (Stroheim had long sold himself in America as an Austrian ex-officer of lofty lineage, but Wilder recognized the way he spoke German—the accent of the "rougher suburbs" of Vienna. Apparently Wilder said nothing about this real-life masquerade. Professional courtesy?)

Then came *Double Indemnity*, adapted from James M. Cain. His collaborator, for this film only, was Raymond Chandler, who later said that working with Wilder "was an agonizing experience and has probably shortened my life, but I learned from it as much about screenwriting as I am capable of learning." The Wilder intensity again. Further down the list of shadowy films came *Sunset Boulevard*, for which Wilder tried to engage Pola Negri before he approached Gloria Swanson. (Negri had starred for Lubitsch in Berlin.) Others on this darker list were *The Lost Weekend*, the trajectory of an alcoholic; *Ace in the Hole*, about the crass exploitation of a disaster; a courtroom drama called *Witness for the Prosecution*; and *Fedora*, about a famous woman's buried secrets.

These dark films often had non-Hollywood flavor, even some of those drawn from American sources. Instance: *The Lost Weekend* came from an American novel, yet, as Lally says, the camera work shows more German expressionist influence than any other Wilder picture. Still, it was chiefly the comedies that nourished Wilder's growing *flâneur* image. (And, unlike any other director, sparks of Wilder's personal wit found their way to the public and amplified the figure of the suave European. About an actor in one of his films who had to sing a song, Wilder said that he had "the musical ear of Van Gogh.")

Wilder parted from Brackett in 1950. After five pictures with other partners, he joined up with I.A.L. Diamond, who was fourteen years younger and the foreign-born son of immigrants from Romania. This team, with one exception, wrote every Wilder picture thereafter, most of them based on European sources. Walter Matthau, who was in several of the later Wilder films, said that Wilder insisted on fidelity to the script. "Actually he was a director because he wanted to protect his writing." The remark doesn't do justice to Wilder's directorial polish; but Wilder did insist that the Wilder-Diamond dialogue be followed exactly as written. No freehand riffs.

The Continental patina became inseparable from Wilder, not only because so many of his story sources were European, but also because so many of the films dealt with American values thumping against European values. (*The Emperor Waltz* put Bing Crosby at the court of Franz Josef.) And Wilder often used European colleagues. As his art director he frequently engaged Alexander Trauner, born in Budapest (not Vienna, as Lally says) and based in Paris, whose awesome career included *Les Enfants du Paradis*, *Hôtel du Nord* and *Le Jour se Léve*. The scores of many Wilder films were composed by Miklos Rozsa, also born in Budapest; several were written by Frederick Hollander, born Friedrich Holländer, who had written Marlene Dietrich's

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songs in *The Blue Angel.*

Wilder, enthusiastically American, clearly needed the support, perhaps the comfort, of European stimuli. His work became an analogue of himself: born abroad, flowering in Hollywood, and eager to make both elements apparent. In this he differed from his revered Lubitsch, whose Hollywood screenplays hold very few American ingredients. Lubitsch remained a (very welcome) visitor. Possibly the difference between the two men rose from the fact that Wilder, unlike the early-arrived Lubitsch, was a Hitler refugee and began his American life in a nimbus of grateful wonder.

I've recently seen five Wilder films again, and, together with fairly clear memories of many other Wilder pictures, they point to some conclusions. First, he is enamored of two recurrent themes: masquerade, as noted, and the protagonist who is either a worm that turns or an antihero who alters. Some have seen these themes as psychological hints about Wilder himself. Allowing for the fact that such choices carry implications, I would view them more as congenial professional tools than as Rorschach tests of the Wilder psyche.

Other matters emerge. The performances by children are dreadful (Fred MacMurray's kids in *The Apartment,* James Cagney's in *One, Two, Three*). Wilder seems impatient to get the kids' stuff over and done with. Then there are the Jewish characters, two in *Some Like It Hot,* three in *The Apartment.* They are all played hammily, almost as caricatures. Possibly there was no connection here with Lubitsch in Wilder's mind, but those Jews made me think of the caricature Jew that Lubitsch wrote and himself played in the early films of his Berlin days.

One happier Lubitsch reminder is the so-called "touch" for which he was celebrated. Theodore Huff defined it as a "swift innuendo or rapier-like 'comment' accomplished pictorially by a brief camera-shot or telling action, to convey an idea or suggestion in a manner impossible in words." Two such "touches" in Wilder are a bit with Las Vegas waiters in *Kiss Me, Stupid* and a bit with football team employees in *The Fortune Cookie.* The very fact that it would take a long paragraph to explain each "touch" is a tribute to what is condensed there.

Fusing away culturally, Wilder often uses a device that I think of as American, the double take—the glance at something or the hearing of something that doesn't register immediately. The person proceeds, then is hit by a large belated reaction. Examples: Jack Lemmon's discovery of Shirley MacLaine in his bed in *The Apartment;* in *One, Two, Three,* Cagney's learning that his ward is married.

Wilder, to whom film is a habitat, likes intrafilmic references, which are tickling if they are picked up, harmless if they are not. In *Some Like It Hot,* George Raft gibes at a gangster for the same coin-flicking trick that he himself used in *Scarface,* and the actor he taunts is the son of Edward G. Robinson, famed for his own gangster roles. Cagney has two film quotes in *One, Two, Three*: when he thinks his hash is settled, he says, "Is this the end of Rico?" (Little Caesar's last line), and he reprises his own grapefruit bit from *The Public Enemy.*

Precision is such a passion of Wilder's that it's especially shocking to note some poor performances in his films. In the five recently re-seen, some of the acting is better than I remembered. Shirley MacLaine's elevator operator in *The Apartment* encloses an authentic person in its quietness. In *One, Two, Three,* Arlene Francis's harried yet cool wife is buoyed up by years of Broadway know-how. As her husband, however, the usually excellent Cagney is blatantly under the director's orders to keep the farce fast. Cagney's best acting always seemed based on a private rhythm in his head: his roles seemed danced. He never quite found the rhythm for this part. And in *Kiss Me, Stupid,* four of the five principals, Dean Martin, Kim Novak, Cliff Osmond and Ray Walston, are painfully bad. Wilder says he knew early on that this film was a disaster, but a director of his skill could have done something more even with those wretched people.

Still, that film and *The Apartment* and *One, Two, Three* might have misfired in any case because the European-American fusion falters. (Wilder and Diamond set the Cagney picture, taken from Molnar, in Berlin, but its principals and its nature are American.) Names and places and jobs are easy to change, but mental creases are harder to iron out. *Kiss Me, Stupid* was taken from an

A Baseball Team Of Unknown Navy Pilots Pacific Theater, 1944

Assigned a week's good bunt, run, throw,
Makeshift uniforms, long practices,
Then games, playoffs, and a round of photos
Stark as this one slipping from its frame,
Where hats, gloves, bats in hand these stood
Lined up and focused, smiling and unnamed—

Till the shutter clicked and each went back,
Retracing zagged geometries
Of the navigator's elbowed tack
And smudged replotted overrule
Pulled from a fix when miles off track
They crabbed the wind and calculated fuel;

And then the wide sleek secret fleet below
Blacked out until the climbing tracers
Sent their bright concussive flak
And going on was all. Time wound,
And some planes banking, others not;
And the one, tail-riddled, easing down,

Crew tossing weight for altitude
Till smoke and someone spelling out a fix.
Then static graveling the words.
And still these faces, whose names we never got,
As all we know is they returned to bases,
Went up when told, came home or not.

WYATT PRUNTY

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Italian play, in which a husband uses his wife as bait for a business venture. I dare say that such a maneuver has happened sometime, somewhere, in the USA, but Wilder's characters just don't fit the plot. It's as if the characters themselves were playing roles in a local production of a European play.

Yet—resoundingly—much of the time the transatlantic fusion succeeds. *A Foreign Affair*, set in the postwar ruins of Berlin, confronts that fusion directly. Marlene Dietrich is a German survivor who now must survive the American occupiers. Poignantly, the picture blends the temper of an old culture, weary of its weariness, and a newer, brighter culture, deservedly triumphant yet wearing its triumph in a slightly nouveau riche way. If the viewer happens to know that Wilder's mother and grandmother and stepfather were incinerated at Auschwitz, it gives the film a steep dimension. But even those who don't know those chilling facts can still sense the basic daring: the exiled Wilder returning to the blasted city in which he once gamboled, insisting that no culture is monochrome and that, if life goes on at all, it is, among other things, funny.

In Wilder's masterpiece, *Some Like It Hot*, a film that will last as long as the medium lasts, the bicultural fusion is perfect. Wilder and Diamond found their premise in a German film of the 1930s, which they jettisoned completely except for that premise: two male musicians forced to masquerade as women in order to join an all-female band. Wilder and Diamond "Americanized" the film perfectly through the device that compels the men to masquerade. Accidentally the musicians witness the St. Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago in 1929; the killers want to rub them out, so, in order to flee, the two men dress in drag and go with the band to Florida.

To me, it's a masterpiece for a primal reason: not for its bicultural fusion or its slice of American social history, valid though those reasons are—or for the psycho-sexual implications that have been found in the cross-dressing—but simply because every time I see it (certainly twenty times by now) I laugh. It also has considerable pathos, which also always affects me, but it is unfailingly comic. What more is true of, say, *Lysistrata*? When we scrutinize the picture's comic perfection, we discern the technical mastery that creates its comic power. The structure, the dialogue, the timing are immaculate. The performances shine: Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis were never better, before or after. And the crown of the film is the small miracle that Wilder wrought with Marilyn Monroe.

She had worked for Wilder once before, in *The Seven Year Itch*, where she had been little more than an ambulatory pin-up. Here Wilder and Diamond accomplished something more complex and interesting: a self-portrait. They used Monroe herself as the matrix of her role. Twelve years after the film's release, I wrote a long article about it and queried Wilder for some particulars, all of which he supplied cheerily. Then I asked whether he and Diamond had been thinking of Monroe for the singer right from the start. This time he seemed to be replying through his teeth: "We didn't think of Marilyn Monroe when we started plotting *Some Like It Hot*—about halfway through we signed her and went back to fit her unique requirements as always."

The trouble that Monroe made during the shooting is notorious, but Wilder and Diamond did more than meet her requirements, and Wilder, as director, did even more. They found in Monroe herself the sex and pathos and ditsy comedy. This self-portrait, perhaps unknown to Monroe, makes it her only appearance that is a complete performance, and seals the American perfection of the picture.

Wilder's last film, *Buddy Buddy* (1981), was adapted by him and Diamond from a French comedy. Lally says truly: "The main problem with *Buddy Buddy* is that it just isn't very funny." It feels as if Wilder was now relying on bicultural fusion, rather than relishing it. Well, all careers undulate; and with the more notable ones, a character usually emerges through the ups and downs. So with Wilder. Possibly the most salient aspect of his character is a paradox. Embracing Hollywood, in itself and as an epitome of America, he nonetheless wanted his films to contradict it, at least partly. He wanted to create an atmosphere of deft European theater and film in his pictures, almost of cabaret wit. Ensconced in a huge heterogeneous country, smack in the middle of a mass art, he wanted to make films for an audience as homogeneous as he dared to imagine it.

Yes, he often said that he wanted to make pictures for the mass public, but he often wants also to beguile that audience into a new concept of itself. He wants it to think of itself as people who know one another and can exchange winks. Even when he is deepest in America, whether the film is shadowy or bright, we seem to hear Wilder saying, "Listen, I have a little story to tell you, let's sit down in this café." •

TRB *continued from page 8*

cause Warner had backed an independent Republican candidate against North in the general election. (Said Reed in his typical Delphic style, "Obviously, a lot of religious conservatives are going to end up voting for Jim Miller because of their concern about John Warner's lack of support for Oliver North.")

As the Christian Coalition sometimes acknowledges, it operates within the Republican Party in much the same way the AFL-CIO operates within the Democratic Party. But there is one crucial difference. The AFL-CIO openly endorses candidates, and its political action committees operate within the federal election laws. The Christian Coalition does not. Reed's group insists it is not intervening in campaigns when it clearly is. This has helped produce a blacklash—evidenced last week when Republican primary voters chose Warner over Miller in crushing numbers. The Coalition's partisanship lends weight to the perception that its real agenda is not the moral renovation of America, but its own political empowerment. In their recent book, *Dirty Little Secrets*, University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato and *Wall Street Journal* reporter Glenn Simpson are right on target when they describe the Coalition as a "powerful, secretly partisan, unregulated fundraising machine."

Moreover, the Coalition's electoral activities sow distrust of church participation in politics. Churches are neither social welfare nor political organizations. As charitable institutions, they enjoy governmental subsidies—contributions to churches are tax-deductible—and are not supposed to participate in politics at all. By using churches as vehicles in its electoral activity, the Christian Coalition is indirectly using taxpayers to subsidize its political activity.

The Coalition could change how it participates in politics without abandoning its tax status and becoming a political committee. It could follow the example of the AFL-CIO or Americans for Democratic Action and set up a separate political action committee that endorses, funds and works for candidates. While that's not a perfect solution—organizations can still ferry money and personnel between their social welfare and political action sides—it would at least be a step toward institutional honesty. But the Coalition would then have to identify its donors, including businesses. And it would have to stop using churches as political entrepots and ministers as precinct captains. Would Reed and Coalition Chairman Pat Robertson be willing to do so? Not likely.

JOHN B. JUDIS

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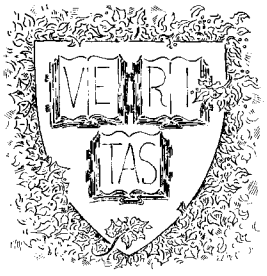
CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Reunion dues

I AM LONG PAST MY TWENTY-FIFTH reunion. Now it is the students I met as a young teacher who return to Cambridge for theirs. My wife and I have kept up with some of them over the decades; they are among our closest friends. Still, they have come, this time, not to see us but their own cohort from a quarter century ago. As Jamie and Marcy tell us about this coming together of the Class of 1971, it is clear that many of the memories are touched by melancholy. For the usual reasons, of course—life has not always been kind to these young men and women who left the Yard with great promise and greater expectations—but also for reasons rooted in the history that infused their college years with confusion and anger. Much of this was the war. "The war," meaning—not, as Bob Dole thinks, World War II or, as the young assume, the Gulf war—Vietnam. But men of Harvard did not generally go to this war; other youngsters, from less privileged backgrounds, did. Rather, the men of Harvard and women of Radcliffe (itself now a bare memory) protested against it and against all the institutions they thought, however vaguely, complicit with it—the university included. Complicity, however, is not a precise category. This aspect of their protest has left them, I gather, with regrets. When our friends returned from the Commencement exercises, they seemed stunned by the good humor of this year's graduates, cheering on the returning alumni, clapping for the faculty, saluting the president's party. There were no armbands, no placards, no slogans, no nonnegotiable demands. It evoked a nostalgia for something they had not lived, college without rancor, without siege.

REUNIONS ARE TIMES FOR TALKING. One alumnus lamented that he did not know how to teach his children love of country. Others recalled from their undergraduate years the beginnings of corrosive identity politics. Our visitors, working at a great state university, know much about this corrosion. "It is very destructive," one of them asserted. "One yearns for something else." The college had put the reunion class "online." Its members were communicating with each other on the Web, and had been doing so for some months. My friends found this exhilarating—the instant honesty, even intimacy, that comes from comparable (if not altogether happy) experiences at a formative time in their lives. The Harvard Class of '71 (though a disproportionately privileged microcosm) may be, then, a welcome and rare instance of cross-race, cross-ethnic, cross-professional identity, an identity that binds but does not divide, an identity that is not an interest group.

AL GORE CAME TO CAMBRIDGE TO speak at the MIT ceremonies. He did not give, as some assumed he would, a technowhiz speech. Had he done so, he would have fallen into an embarrassing trap called Buzzword Bingo, set by some prankster seniors. But he did not give a political speech, either. He had corresponded with the graduating class by e-mail, asking them to articulate their concerns, and his address made clear that he had grappled with what they wrote. Gore defended science against its detractors, enemies of the enlightenment, and he cautioned scientists against hubris. More challenging, though, was his reflection on scientific metaphors: representative government and capitalism, for example, as expressions of parallel processing. Imagine a vice president with a grasp of "whole systems" and "complexity theory," so secure that he will take his thoughts even to MIT. Science is producing in our society what Thomas Kuhn has called a "paradigm shift" (really many paradigm shifts), and Gore may be among the very few in public life who understands what this means for democratic politics.



SOME 2,000 STUDENTS RECEIVED degrees from MIT last Friday. There were more women among them than stereotypes of MIT would suggest and, amazingly, more Asians as well. Alas, there were few blacks in the robed crowd; and, of those there were, most wore a shawl of kente cloth, an artifact of the regal Asante of Ghana, a shred of plaintive group identity in an institution devoted to universal science. And there were other signs of a barely understood social trajectory: there were two people named Cohen under the letter "C" in the index of degree recipients. And five Chans, ten Changs, twenty-four Chens, seven Chengs beginning with one Beethoven Cheng, plus various Chiangs, Chaos, Chows etc. Here are all the last names on one page, chosen literally at random, listing those receiving the BS degree in biology: Hu, Huang, two other Huangs, Islam, Jonietz, Kang, Kao, Kavalerchik, Keables, Kesner, Kho, Kim, another Kim, Ko, Kcmeili, Koo, Kuang, Kumar, Kurtz, Lai, Lee, two other Lees, Li, Liew. Odds are, many of these students are first- or second-generation Americans, and if this does not strike you as a persuasive argument for continued immigration, let me tell you about Felicisimo Galicia. He received BS degrees in Materials Science and Engineering, in Physics and in Mathematics, plus a MS degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, with a thesis on "Plasma Wave Induced Chaos in a Magnetic Field."

MIT GIVES NO HONORARY DEGREES. Harvard is more ornamental. It has given honorary degrees for centuries. And, this year, Jesse Jackson's grievance against the Academy Awards cannot be lodged against this academy (or, for that matter, most other first- and second-tier universities). Out of eleven honorary degrees at Harvard, five went to blacks—one to the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, four others to African Americans. One of these is the rather ordinary William T. Coleman, big-time Washington lawyer and secretary of transportation under President Ford. Harold Amos is an eminent microbiologist, recognized widely as both a researcher and teacher, a tenured member of both the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. (In 1969, he raised his hand at a meeting of the latter faculty and President Pusey recognized him to speak, "Professor Kilson....") Judith Jamison has been head of the Alvin Ailey Dance Company since Ailey died in 1989, but her one really distinctive contribution to her art was in the solo piece "Cry" that Ailey created for her twenty-five years ago. No matter, Harvard also honored two philanthropists, one white, Walter Annenberg, the other black, Oseola McCarty, the laundress who over the years saved up $150,000 and gave it all to the University of Southern Mississippi. Pairing these two was inspired.

OVER THE YEARS, FRIENDS WHO are college presidents, desperate because their first-choice black couldn't make it, have called for advice. "Whom should we honor?" I always have some ideas. They are well-enough accomplished but not well-enough known. So the harried president pursues some already certified African American. As of 1995, Marian Wright Edelman had fifty-seven honorary degrees and Maya Angelou thirty-four. Cornel West, according to his agent's office, has so many they've stopped counting. Even Harvard's mixed list showed that there are others more worthy, many others.

MARTIN PERETZ

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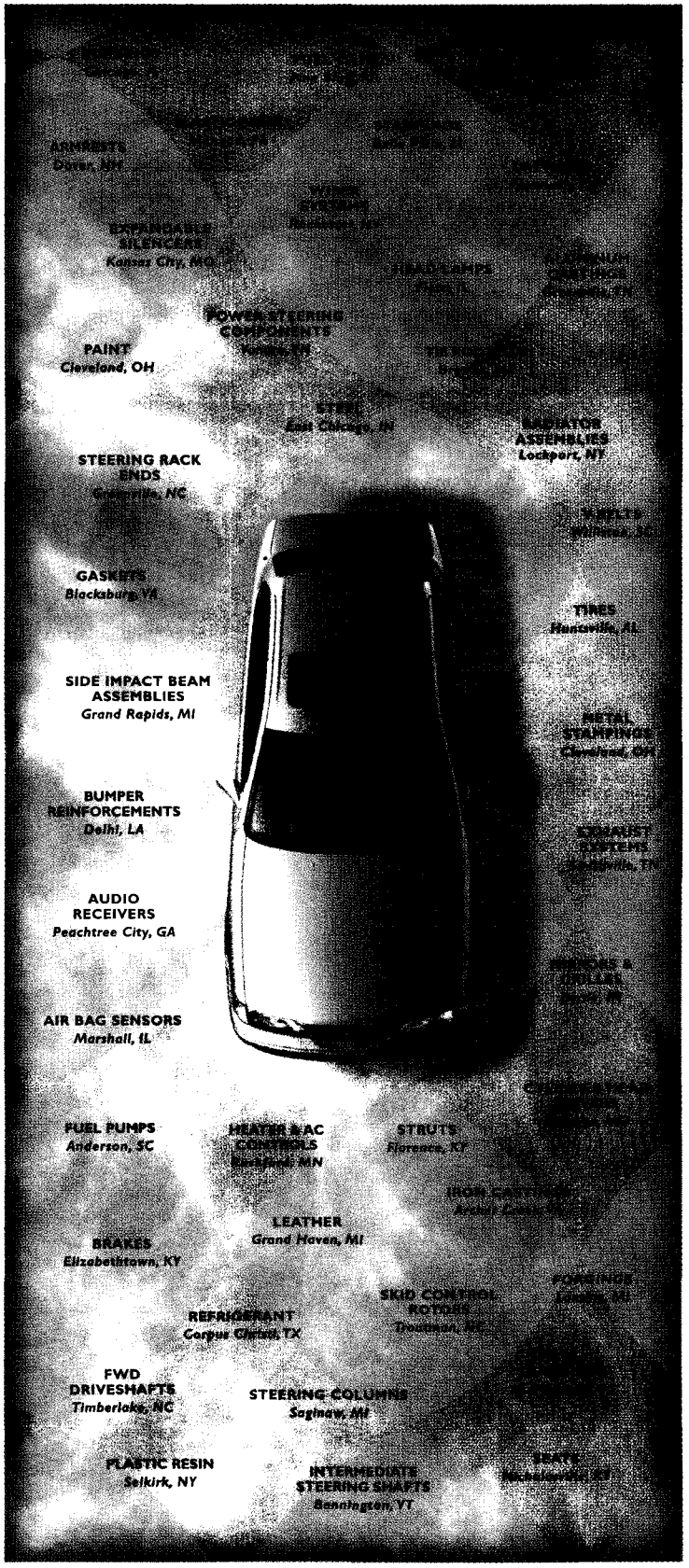

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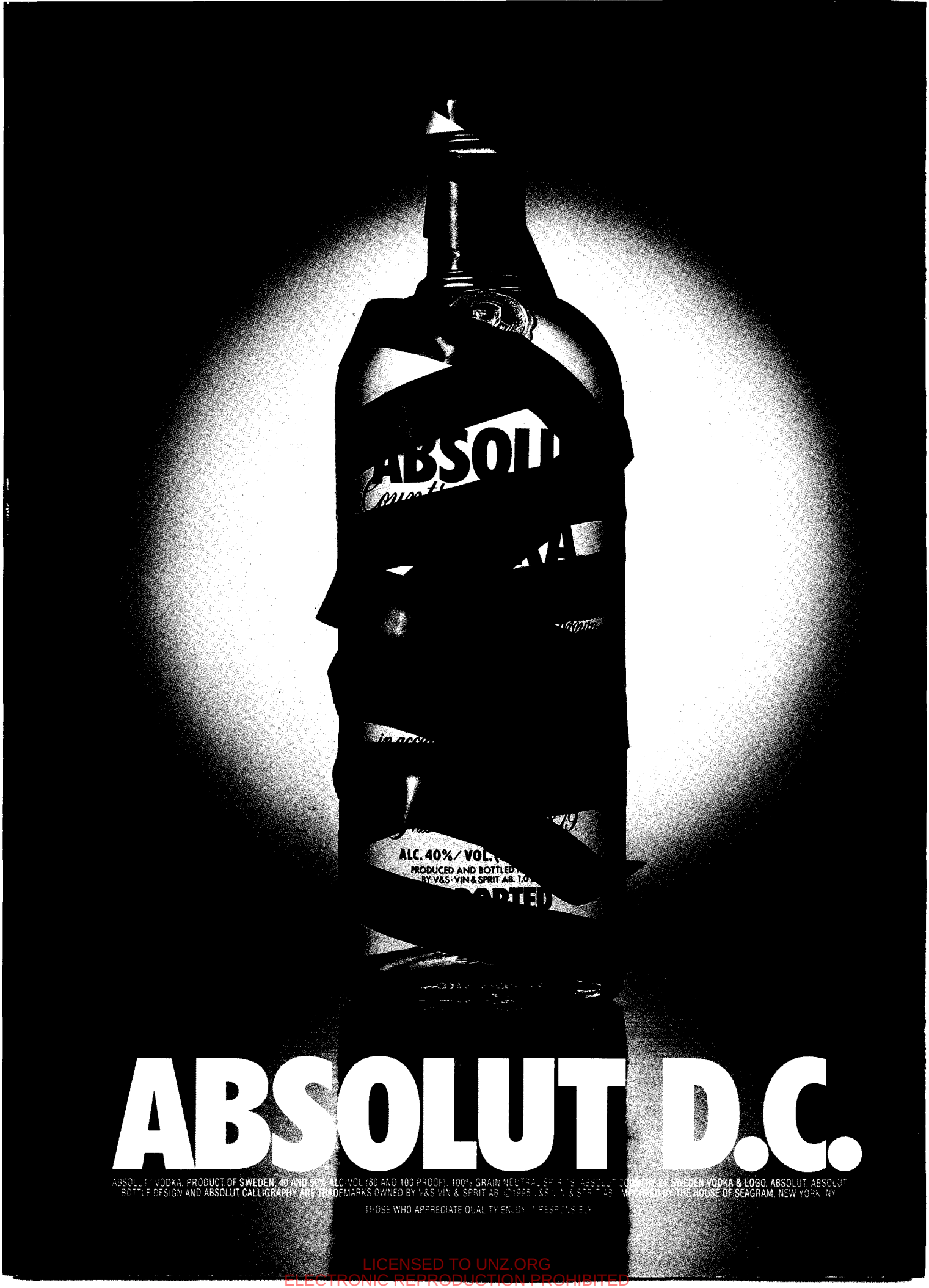

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